

**Selected slides  
from 10/16 Presentation**



# **Moment by Moment: Caregiving with Presence for Self-Preservation and Connection**

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There are only four kinds of people in the world -

Those who have been caregivers,  
Those who currently are caregivers,  
Those who will be caregivers and,  
Those who will need caregivers.

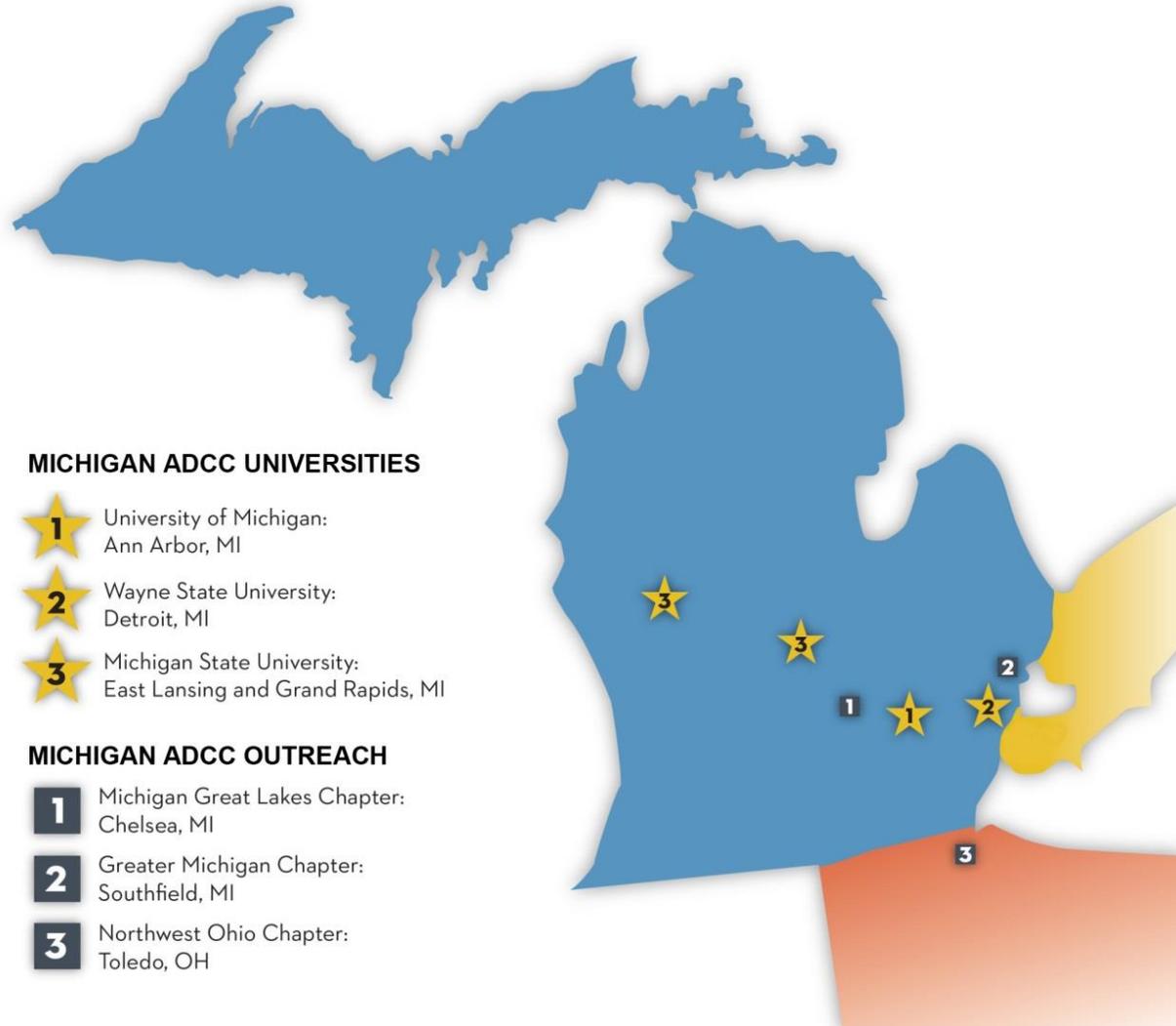
- Rosalynn Carter

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# Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center



Connecting across the region...



# Wellness Initiative

Stress resilience, education, wellbeing & mindfulness programming for those caring for a family member living with memory loss & adults living with memory loss.

- Monthly *Catching Your Breath* program
- Twice annual *Caregiver Wellness Day* retreat
- *Mindfulness-based Dementia Care* course
- Monthly tune-Up and support program for all MBDC graduates
- Weekly, drop-in meditation practice session – *Have a Seat*



# Arrival Practice



“When I am constantly running, there is no time for being. When there is no time for being, there is no time for listening.”

- Madeleine L'Engle

# Cultivating Presence

Cultivating presence, or mindfulness, is training the mind to develop greater awareness of the present moment, including current physical sensations, thoughts and feelings, without judging one's self or one's experience.

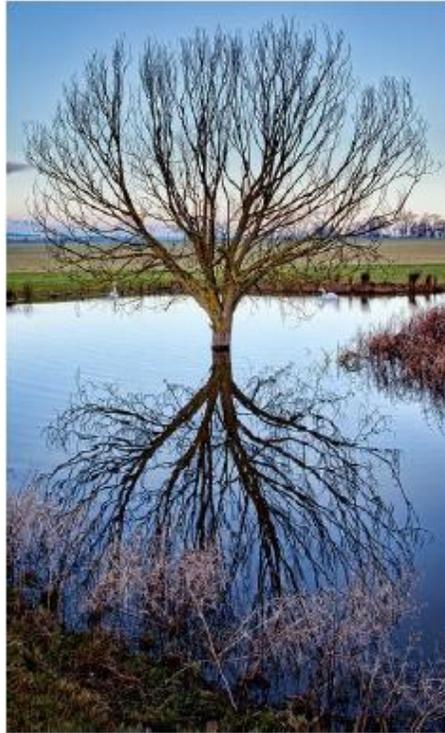


# Presence as a practice:

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- **A practice** and a way of being in a wise relationship with the moment and in our lives
- About becoming **less reactive** and more intentionally present
- A willingness to **modify our perspective**
- Fostered by “assuming a stance of an **impartial witness** to your own experience.”
- **Being aware** of our natural inclination to become entangled in our stories, lost in our incessant thinking and doing.
- **Observing our impulses** and ultimately, having the **skillful means to respond thoughtfully** to life as it unfolds – moment by moment

# Presence Practice



“Life is all a memory, except for the one present moment that goes by you so quickly, you hardly catch it going.”

- Tennessee Williams

# How is mindfulness helpful for care partners?

- Most care partners experience chronic physical and/or emotional stress, which weakens their immune system and leads premature aging of cells (telomeres) and illness.
- Not surprisingly, most caregivers are concerned about maintaining their own health and well-being.
- Many caregivers experience depression and other mood changes that can make caregiving more difficult.
- Living with a brain disease is unexpected, often unpredictable and frustrating, and very stressful.

# Care Partner Parachutes

“It’s not the load that breaks you down.  
It’s the way you carry it.”  
– Lena Horne



**#1.** Present care partners **understand** the complexity of their **stressors** and know how to **apply this knowledge** to improve their health & well-being.

- ***They recognize*** helpful stress vs. harmful stress and are deeply familiar with their own stress responses.
- They utilize this insight to ***respond***, make decisions & advocate in the moment, which **reinforces their resilience**.
- They ***recover more quickly*** from unexpected events and challenges.
- They can then ***recommit*** to healthy activities and self-care without judgment & guilt.

## #2. Present care partners know *how & when* to provide care for themselves.

- They recognize the importance and impact of ***brief releases & micro-breaks*** from caring during the day.
- ***They support healthy habits*** by setting up their environment encourage healthy actions.
- ***Connected to friends*** and a peer network. They ***recognize this need early*** and become a model for other care partners.
- ***Know their refuges*** – anything that brings you ***back to yourself***, to ease and peace, even in the midst of chaos.

# Practice: Know your Refuges

- Refuge: the concept of creating a safe, reliable connection to yourself; whatever brings you back to yourself
- Being present – noticing your breath
- Nature, contemplative practices, journaling, poetry...
- Music
- Meditation, Mindful walking, Yoga, Tai Chi
- Retreat
- A quiet space in your home and also, your office

*What are your refuges? How will you bring refuge into your daily routine?*

**#3.** Present care partners are *highly attuned* to their partner and *aware* of their partner's needs, as differentiated from their own.

- ***Continually prepare for interactions*** and assess their well-being first.
- ***Caregiving becomes a practice of well-being*** and not the source of dis-ease or an obstacle to care
- Being intentional and present, they are able to ***see their partner clearly and accept them as they are*** – not limited by expectations, judgment, anger, anxiety, etc.

# 'Before Meeting' Practice

- May I/you be patient
- May I/you be calm
- May I/you be kind
- ....May I get through this without losing my calm....or mind....





## **S.T.O.P.**

**Stop**

**Take a breath** (take note of where you feel it most easily in the body)

**Observe** (acknowledge what is happening in this moment)

**Put aside** (pause, proceed, plan....)

Breath - Body - Thoughts

“Some terrible things have happened in my life, some of which have actually happened.”

~Mark Twain

## #4. Present care partners spend time *taking in the good* and *cultivating gratitude*.

- Find meaning in caregiving. They know how to *take in the good* and understand that positive experiences are often minimized, dismissed, or distorted by stress responses and habit.
- Dedicated to practices that keep them well and are **deeply curious** about learning new ways of responding to their struggles.
- Understand that *practicing gratitude* can help them to more easily **shift focus** from all the things that are going wrong to the things in this moment that are good, that bring us joy.

# Practice: Cultivating Gratitude

- 1-3 things you are grateful for today
  - Small or large
  - Person, Thing, Experience

***PAUSE: Notice How you feel.***

- ....add the 'because'

I am grateful for \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

***Notice how you feel now. Did adding the 'because' change anything?***

**#5.** Present care partners are *kind and compassionate* with themselves, especially when they make mistakes or are struggling with a challenge.

- Understand that beating themselves up only adds *insult to injury* and has a negative impact on the present and future.
- Recognize when they are being hard on themselves and *apply kindness liberally to the affected area.*
- Know that they are more likely to be kind and compassionate with others, including their partner, if they are *kind and compassionate with themselves.*

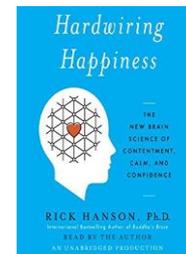
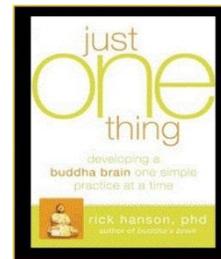
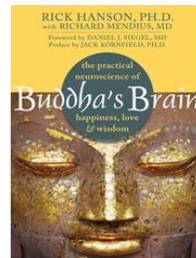
# Practice: Self-Compassion

- This is struggle/suffering.
  - This is hard. This hurts. This is exasperating!
- Struggle/Suffering is a part of life.
  - I am not alone.
  - All care partners struggle.
- May I be kind to myself.
  - This is a learning process.
  - Beating myself up won't help.
  - I am doing the best that I can.
  - This too shall pass.
  - May I give myself the love, compassion, understanding I would give to a good friend in this same situation.

“Every time you take in the good, you build a little bit of neural structure. Doing this a few times a day—for months and even years—will gradually change your brain, and how you feel and act, in far-reaching ways.”

~Rick Hanson, PhD  
Neuropsychologist

Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom



# Five Reasons to Practice

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- To reduce stress and improve your mental & physical health
- To increase your sense of self-efficacy as a care partner
- To improve the well-being of the person(s) in your care
- To decrease the frequency of and need for challenging behavioral symptoms
- To improve the chances of noticing more opportunities for calm, connection and kindness

# Local, Secular Resources for Mindfulness Training & Practice

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M-Healthy <https://hr.umich.edu/benefits-wellness/health-well-being/mhealthy>

Ann Arbor Center for Mindfulness [www.aacfm.com](http://www.aacfm.com)

Mindful City Ann Arbor [www.mindfulcityannarbor.org](http://www.mindfulcityannarbor.org)

Beaumont Center for Mindfulness <https://www.beaumont.org/services/center-for-mindfulness>

MC4Me – MI Collaborative for Mindfulness in Education <https://www.mc4me.org/>

Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center: Wellness Initiative

<https://alzheimers.med.umich.edu/wellness-initiative/>

