For Family Caregivers

Well Connected

Volume 4, Issue 6
Nov & Dec 2025

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter for Family Caregivers

Sauk County Aging and Disability Resource Center
505 Broadway
Baraboo, WI 53913
(608)355-3289

November is National Family Caregiver Month and so to all family caregivers, THANK YOU. Your compassion and dedication make all the difference. 'Plug-in to Care' is the 2025 theme for National Family Caregiver Month. What does Plug-in to Care mean to you? Plug-in to Care means many things to me.

- **Plug-in** to online support such as educational webinars, virtual support groups, and online learning. Some great resources include www.wisconsincaregiver.org, www.caregiveraction.org, and https://wisconsincaregiver.trualta.com/login.
- **Plug-in** to your community. Staying social is important for you and your loved one. Social connection significantly improves the health and well-being of all individuals. Being more socially connected can improve stress responses and minimize the negative effects of stress (hhs.gov/surgeongeneral). Check out https://exploresaukcounty.com for events happening in Sauk County! https://connectwi.org is another excellent resource to check out for ways to get socially connected.
- **Plug-in** to what you need as a caregiver. Is it respite? Do you need to talk with others going through the caregiving journey? Do you need help financially to continue caring for your loved one at home? Are you wondering what resources are available for you and your loved one? The ADRC is a great place to start. We have funding opportunities, in person support groups, and social workers who can provide information about what's available to you for your specific situation. We also have Kurt Goeckermann, our Dementia Care Specialist who meets with families who have loved ones living with memory impairment or dementia. Give us a call or stop into the office to chat with ADRC staff (608)355-3289, ADRC 505 Broadway, Suite 234, Baraboo, WI 53913.

This November, I hope you can think about what Plug-in to Care means to you. I also hope you can take time to recognize the incredible work you do every day to keep your loved one safe, happy, and healthy.

The 7th Annual Caregiver Boot Camp will be held on Saturday, November 15. We have a handful of spots remaining so if you want to register, call me today! The flyer is on Page 6.

Sincerely,
Marina Wittmann
Aging Program Supervisor
Caregiver Support Program Coordinator
marina.wittmann@saukcountywi.gov

The ADRC will be closed on November 27 & 28, December 24, 25 & 31, January 1, 2026

Ask Kurt!

Kurt Goeckermann
Dementia Care Specialist

My sister and I can’t agree whether out mother, who has dementia, should still stay at home or move to an Assisted Living. How can we resolve this?

Major care decisions are always challenging. I applaud you for saying “we”, not “how can I convince her I am right”. However, the first question we should be asking is “what does your mother want”. Whatever her current ability, your mom should aways be given every opportunity to make her own decisions. With dementia progression this is not always possible or easily ascertained, but every attempt should be made. Sometimes a person may simply state or have stated, “I never want to be put in a home”. While this opinion is important and caregivers go to great lengths, there can come a time when dementia progression and available resources make accommodating this wish extremely difficult or a safety risk.

One great way to preemptively alleviate this is to have discussions prior to or very soon upon any dementia signs and symptoms or diagnosis. Ideally all family or parties involved should be part of a discussion with the person who may need care. Every adult, regardless of status, should create a Health Care Power of Attorney, designating who they would want to make health decisions if they were unable. We should utilize this creation to make sure the individual has communicated what they would want if something like facility placement became imminent. The agents designated Health Care Power of Attorney is supposed to do what the person would have wanted, not what they want. They are also supposed to consult the person as much as possible, even if doctors have activated the power of attorney. Other family and caregivers who are not the designated agents should be involved in the discussion so they also understand what the person wanted. This conversation should to be more extensive and realistic than “I don’t want to leave my home.” If dementia has progressed beyond the ability to create a power of attorney don’t worry about what should have been. There are still avenues to have legal representation and resources that can help negotiate them.

Through education, more and more people have a Health Care Power of Attorney in place. Even when they do, families and caregivers can have varying opinions. If the person has advanced in their dementia, they are losing the ability to make decisions or be involved fully. If, at that point there is disagreement, the way it is managed can be very important. An open and nonjudgemental approach is almost always better. Family meetings can be very helpful if approached this way. Even when there is a legal, designated, activated Health Care agent it is better to have clear communication. In having formal or informal discussions there are some tactics that can be helpful.

1. Make sure everyone who is involved has good information. What are the health and care issues? Who is the primary caregiver(s)? Are there any immediate safety concerns(falls, wandering, medications…)? What are practical needs(transportation, meals, bathing/toileting…)? How is the person with dementia doing emotionally? The more caregivers are aware of and have a common understanding before discussion the better.

2. Put significant emphasis on how the caregivers are doing. I often tell people we worry about caregivers as much as the person with dementia. When the caregivers aren’t doing well, usually no one is doing well. If they are stating that they are struggling practically or emotionally we should believe them. Just as each person with dementia experiences it differently, each caregiver does also. We all have different talents, coping skills, time and supports. These will be important factors in making any decision. Guilt is usually not helpful in a caregiving situation. Each caregiver and family is unique. Comparing your situation to other families or other caregivers is unproductive except in identifying strategies that may work for you.

Continued...

3. In any meeting, formal or informal, try to avoid “you” statements such as “you never…” or “you always…”. Instead, state facts such as, “if no one is available to get mom up two days a week we will have to hire help or look at a facility”. If a caregiver is struggling, they should be able to state this using “I” statements such as “I can only help mom two mornings a week” or “I need to be able to sleep nights before I work and can’t help mom on those evenings” or “with mom’s current behavior I am becoming depressed and need some form of respite”. These approaches alleviate accusations and the natural human response of becoming defensive.

4. Sometimes the primary caregiver is the only one seeing all the issues and deficits. If you are only helping sporadically or live some distance and visit occasionally, it is very common that you may not be seeing all the challenges. Generally, we should believe those that are regularly helping the person. It may be beneficial to have someone who is less involved act as the primary caregiver for several days so they can see a more realistic picture of challenges. That person should keep in mind that, while instructive, those few days do not fully equal the stress and fatigue that can occur over longer stretches of time.

5. Finances are a fact of life and can impact what help or facility is possible. A realistic assessment of options financially is important. Additionally, even if someone can afford long periods of home care, it may be very hard to find or simply not available. A common understanding by all will be helpful in decision making. You can consult legal assistance, a financial planner or speak with specialists at the ADRC. Call or visit facilities you might be interested in. If your mom is able and willing, bring her or discuss options with her. Encourage all involved to be involved. When practical, get on waiting lists as contingency planning. A waiting list does not mean you are going to a facility, it just gives options. If the discussion of a move upsets your mom or she forgets, there is no reason to spend daily time convincing or reminding her. Address the possibility initially, reassure her and then address again when a possible admission is needed or imminent.

6. Finally, your mom, your family are not alone. The ADRC and the Dementia Care Specialist are available to discuss and identify both practical, financial and emotional supports and approaches. We have listings and suggestions of other agencies and organizations that also provide wonderful services in these areas. Please do not hesitate to call us.

Sincerely, Kurt

Dementia Caregiver Support Meeting

Led by ADRC Dementia Care Specialist, Kurt Goeckermann
ADRC: (608)355-3289

3rd Monday of Every Month | 3:30pm

Spring Green Community Library | 230 E Monroe Street

Caregiver Support Meetings & Memory Cafe's

General Family Caregiver Group

- **Riverwood Senior Living**, Wisc Dells, Last Tuesday @ 10am | Contact Sue, 608-886-0873
- **Woodman Senior Center**, Richland Center, 4th Monday @ 10:30m | Contact Pam, 608-548-3954

Veteran Specific Caregiver Group

- **Baraboo VA Clinic**, 3rd Monday @ 1:30pm | Contact Meghann Schmitt, 608-256-1901 ext. 18615

  *caregiver of an enrolled veteran or enrolled veteran who is a caregiver

Parkinson's Specific Group

- **First Congregational Church** in Baraboo, 3rd Monday @ 2pm | Contact Geri Schoenoff, 608-356-3473

Mental Health Specific Group (adults with a loved one who has symptoms of a mental health condition)

- **West Square Building**, UW Extension Room, 3rd Monday @ 6pm | Contact Ted Hall, 608-301-5390
  - Virtual option available: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84660758640

Dementia Specific Groups

- **Maplewood** in Sauk City, 4th Tuesday @ 3pm | Contact Theresa Grimes, 608-643-3383
- **Virtual Morning Coffee Connect**, Every Monday @ 10am | Contact Pam Kulberg, 608-548-3954
- **Reedsburg Library**, 3rd Wednesday @ 12pm | Contact Marina Wittmann, 608-355-3289
- **Spring Green Community Library**, 3rd Monday @ 3:30pm | Contact Kurt Goeckermann, 608-355-3289

Huntington's Disease Specific Groups

- **Virtual Huntington's Disease Groups**, 3rd Tuesday @ 6:30pm (Caregivers), 2nd Tuesday @ 6:30pm (Young Adults, 16-35), 1st Saturday at 10:30am (Statewide) | Contact Deb Zwickey, 414-257-9499

Lewy Body Dementia Group (Virtual)

- 2nd & 4th Wednesdays @ 1:30pm | Contact Rob Griesel, 920-386-4308, rgriesel@co.dodge.wi.us

Mild Cognitive Impairment (Virtual) (for those experiencing MCI and any initial stage of dementia)

- 1st & 3rd Wednesdays @ 10:30am | Contact Rob Griesel, 920-386-4308, rgriesel@co.dodge.wi.us

Alzheimer's Association Virtual Statewide Groups | call 800-272-3900 to register

- Family Caregivers for Loved Ones, General, 4th Monday @ 3pm
- Family Caregivers for Loved One with Dementia Living at a Facility, every other Friday @ 10am
- Family Caregivers for Loved One with Frontotemporal Degeneration, 3rd Wednesday @ 6pm
- Family Caregivers for Loved One with Dementia in the Early Stages, 4th Tuesday @ 10am

Memory Cafe's

A space where caregivers and loved ones with dementia can socialize and participate in fun activities!

- Fusch Community Center in Reedsburg, 2nd Friday @ 10am | Contact Kurt Goeckermann, 355-3289
- Reach Out Lodi, 4th Friday @ 1pm | Contact 697-2838

ADRC: (608)355-3289

ADRC Aging & Disability Resource Center of Sauk County

10.13.25 Update

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Holiday Tips

For most people, the holidays are happy times, but for many grandparents raising grandchildren, these special days can bring on strong feelings of sadness, anger, loss, or guilt related to the family situation. The following are tips for helping your family manage holiday stress:

- **Talk to someone –**

a support group member, a friend, or counselor to help you work through your feelings.

- **Keep holidays simple.**

Avoid the temptation to compensate for the losses grandchildren have endured.

- **Keep realistic expectations in planning.**

The holiday does not need to be perfect in order for your grandchild to feel loved. You CAN feel good knowing that you are able to support, protect, provide for, and love your grandchildren.

- **Include the child's parent when appropriate.**

Whether or not children have regular or infrequent visits with their parents, maintaining contact is important. It helps your child feel loved and connected. Even if a parent is in a long-term drug treatment or in prison, your child can have a holiday visit. Many children imagine the worst about their parents, and seeing them healthy and safe can be a relief.

- **Review your visitation rules with the child's parent.**

Rules may include no visiting if the parent shows up drunk or high. It is tempting to let rules slide on special occasions, but if you stick to them, you'll have a more pleasant visit and create a good family memory.

- **Anticipate problem situations.**

Parents who can't take care of their children often feel guilty and ashamed. They may make promises they can't keep, try to provide gifts they can't afford, or fail to show up for a scheduled visit. They might pick fights with family members to cover their feelings of shame and sadness. They might get drunk before a visit because they're nervous or feeling bad and don't know how else to cope.

- **Plan a relaxed visit**

in a location you feel comfortable with that is within the rules of any court ordered visitation. If possible, plan low key activities for the parent and child to do together (for example, cooking or making decorations). Tell the parent what the child has been doing lately, some of his favorite foods, TV shows, activities, etc. Encourage the parent to bring a small gift for each child. A handmade card or something from a dollar store can be a child's most cherished gift when it is given by their parent.

- **Talk to children in advance about the visits.**

Ask them what activities they would like to do. Help them be realistic about what to expect. If you think the parent may not show up, or if you expect trouble, talk about that with the child. You might say something like, "Your mom is excited about the visit and I want you two to have a great time, but we know that sometimes in the past, she hasn't always been able to make it to visits. Why don't we plan something to do just in case your mom isn't able to make it?"

- **Expect your child to have mixed feelings at times during the holidays –**

excitement, nervousness, sadness, and anger. They may show these feelings by acting out or becoming withdrawn. Help them put words to their feelings. You can't shield your child from life experiences, but you can be there for them. Be accepting and help them work through their negative feelings.

- **Take care of yourself.**

Pay attention to your own feelings and needs during this time. To help your grandchildren, you need to take care of yourself. https://familycaregiversonline.net/grandparents-raising-grandchildren-holiday-tips/

7TH ANNUAL

CAREGIVER BOOT CAMP

Join the Sauk County ADRC for a FREE educational "survival" program for families coping with Alzheimer's Disease & other dementias.

Saturday, November 15, 2025

Baraboo High School Library; 1201 Draper St.

9:30am - 2:30pm

Boot Camp Agenda:

Dementia 101: Gain a basic understanding of what dementia is

Frequently Asked Questions: Submit questions and get answers

Dementia Live: Step into the shoes of someone living with dementia

ADRC Resources: Learn about ADRC services and programs

And MORE!!

Keynote Speaker:

Jody Krainer, Dementia Diagnostic Clinic Network Manager | Wisconsin Dementia Resource Network Manager, Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute

Reimaging the Family Caregiver Experience - this presentation will look at family caregiver burnout, self-care, and strategies to minimize the risk of burnout when caring for someone living with Alzheimer's dementia.

Registration Required & Appreciated
Contact Marina Wittmann:

☎ ADRC: (608)355-3289

✉ marina.wittmann@saukcountywi.gov

Or scan the QR code to register online!

SCAN ME!

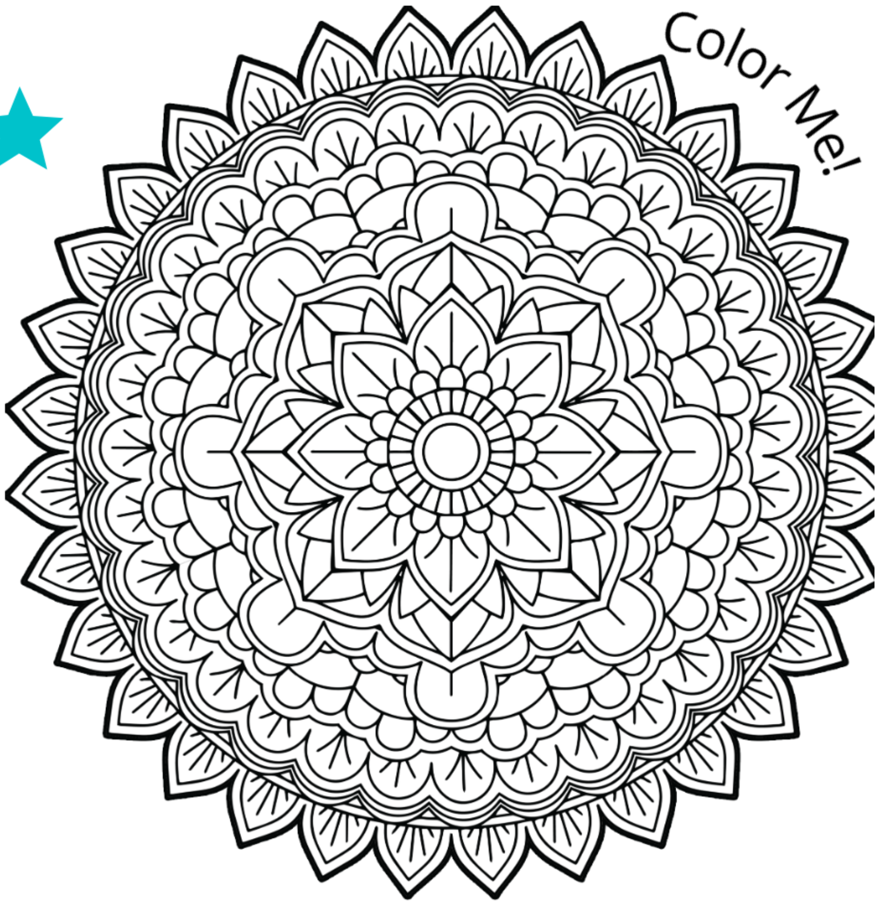
ADRC
Aging and Disability Resource Center
of Sauk County

Included with Boot Camp:
Light Breakfast, Lunch and "Survival Kit"

"My favorite part was the dementia live group discussion. Being able to wear the glasses and headphones helped me understand how things are challenging for the person in so many ways." ~Former Boot Camp Participant

Take 5!

> When we focus on our gratitude, the tide of disappointment goes out and the tide of love rushes in.
>
> ~Kristin Armstrong



AUTUMN WORD SEARCH

- ACORN
- APPLE
- BIRD MIGRATION
- BLOWING LEAVES
- BLUSTERY DAY
- CANNING
- CHESTNUTS
- CHILLY
- COLD
- CROPS
- EQUINOX
- FALL
- FARMING
- FEAST
- FROST
- HALLOWEEN
- HARVEST
- HAYSTACK
- HICKORY NUTS
- LONGER NIGHTS
- NOVEMBER
- OCTOBER
- ORANGE LEAVES
- PIE
- PUMPKIN
- RAKE
- RED LEAVES
- SCARECROW
- SCHOOL
- SEASON
- SEPTEMBER
- SHORTER DAYS
- SQUASH
- SWEET POTATOES
- THANKSGIVING
- TURKEY
- WINDY
- YELLOW LEAVES

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Solution on Page 12

The Holidays and Caregiving

The holidays are often filled with sharing, laughter and memories, but they can also bring stress, disappointment or sadness. A person living with Alzheimer's or another dementia may feel a special sense of loss during the holidays because of the changes he or she has experienced. Caregivers may feel overwhelmed by maintaining traditions while providing care and adhering to safety precautions. Below are tips and ideas for safely enjoying time with family and friends during the holidays.

Adjust Expectations

- The stress of caregiving responsibilities plus holiday traditions can take a toll. It's important to take care of your physical, mental and emotional well-being.
- Arrange for a group discussion via telephone, video call, messaging app or email for family and friends to discuss holiday celebrations in advance. Make sure that everyone understands your caregiving situation and the safety precautions you're taking to help keep your loved one healthy.
- Communicate realistic expectations about what you can and cannot do. Sometimes this can create a sense of loss if you have to give up a role you always had, such as making the turkey, brisket or sweet potato pie, but think of it as a chance for another family member to start a new tradition.
- A conversation in advance is also a great time to let others know about any changes they might see in the person living with dementia. Read more about how to familiarize others with the situation during the holidays.
- Give yourself permission to do only what you can reasonably and safely manage — this may mean much smaller and more casual gatherings, if at all. No one should expect you to maintain every holiday tradition or event.
- Some people living with Alzheimer's become confused or agitated in the evenings (sundowning). Consider celebrating earlier in the day to work around this.

Connect Through Technology

If you cannot visit in person, you can still connect over the holidays.

- Use video call software like Zoom or Skype to gather virtually. Since it can be difficult to have conversations with larger groups over video, adding some structure to the call can help. Play a trivia game, sing seasonal songs or share pictures from past gatherings.
- Use video to capture and digitally send special moments, such as children opening gifts.
- Plan a video call to cook or bake a special recipe together.
- Record and send a "video holiday card" that includes personalized messages.
- Schedule a time to watch a favorite holiday movie together from separate homes. Talk on the phone, text or video chat while you watch.
- If your loved one lives in a long-term care community and struggles with technology, ask a primary caregiver if they can help facilitate a video call. If that's not possible, connecting with a simple phone call goes a long way toward feeling together on the holidays.
- Cross talk or simultaneous conversations can be challenging for people living with dementia or people with hearing impairments, so consider this when planning.

Familiarize Others with the Situation

The holidays are full of emotions, so it can help to let friends and family members know what to expect. If the person is in the early stages of Alzheimer's, relatives and friends might not notice any changes. But the person living with dementia may have trouble following conversation or tend to repeat things. As the disease progresses, there may be significant changes in cognitive abilities that have occurred since their last interactions with some family members.

Continued...

These changes can be a surprise and difficult to accept. Make sure friends and family understand that changes in behavior and memory are caused by the disease and not the person. People can help with communication by being patient, not interrupting or correcting, and giving the person time to finish his or her thoughts. If the person cannot communicate clearly, respond to their tone.

You may find it easier to share changes in a letter or email that can be sent to multiple recipients. Here is an example:

"I'm writing to let you know how things are going at our house. While we're looking forward to the holidays, we thought it might be helpful if you understood our current situation in advance. You may notice that ___ has changed since you last saw him/her. Among the changes you may notice are ___. I've enclosed a picture so you know how ___ looks now. Because ___ sometimes has problems remembering and thinking clearly, his/her behavior is a little unpredictable. Please understand that ___ may not remember who you are and may confuse you with someone else. Please don't feel offended by this. He/she appreciates your time with us and so do we. Please treat ___ as you would any person. A warm smile will be appreciated more than you know. Here are some resources on communicating with somebody living with dementia. We would ask that you call when you're nearby so we can prepare for your arrival. With your help and support, we can create a holiday memory that we'll all treasure."

For more ideas on how to let others know about changes in your loved one, join ALZConnected, our free online support community where caregivers like you share tips on what has worked for them.

Involve the Person Living with Dementia

Involve the person in safe, manageable holiday preparation activities that he or she enjoys:

- Ask him or her to help you prepare food, wrap packages, help decorate or set the table.
- Avoid using candies, artificial fruits and vegetables as decorations because some people living with dementia might confuse them with real food. Blinking lights may also be confusing.
- When making holiday plans, consider what will be most comfortable and enjoyable for the person living with dementia, while keeping safety in mind. Maintain the person's normal routine as much as possible, so that holiday preparations don't become disruptive or confusing.
- Focus on the things that bring happiness and let go of activities that seem overwhelming, stressful or too risky. Taking on too many tasks can wear on both of you.
- Build on traditions and memories and experiment with new traditions that might be less stressful or a better fit with your caregiving responsibilities, such as watching seasonal movies.

Adapt Gift Giving

Depending on the stage of disease, some well-intentioned gifts for the person or their caregiver may be practical or bring happiness.

- Opening gifts over a video call like Zoom or Skype or even over a phone call can still feel very personal.
- Advise people not to give gifts such as dangerous tools or instruments, utensils, challenging board games, complicated electronic equipment or pets.
- Depending on his or her abilities and preferences, involve the person in gift giving. For example, someone who once enjoyed baking may enjoy helping to make cookies and pack them in tins or boxes. Or you may want to buy the gift so that the person can wrap it.

https://www.alz.org/help-support/resources/holidays

Free Memory Screening

A memory screen is a wellness tool that helps identify possible changes in memory and cognition. It also creates a baseline to track changes in memory over time.

Monday, January 5, 2026

1:00 - 4:00pm (reservations required)
George Culver Community Library
615 Phillips Blvd, Sauk City, WI 53583

To reserve a time for screening, please contact Kurt Goeckermann, Sauk County Dementia Care Specialist at the Sauk County Aging and Disability Resource Center (608)355-3289.

ESTD 1844
SAUK COUNTY
WISCONSIN

ADRC
Aging and Disability Resource Center
of Sauk County
Your Bridge to Support

Finding Your Third Place

Building Happier Communities (and Making Great Friends Along the Way)

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

Age Well Series

What is your third place?

At a time when our nation is facing an epidemic of loneliness, when communities are suffering from loss of trust, low levels of engagement, despair, and political polarization, what if the answer to many of our problems lies in a simple idea? What if we just need to pay attention to the places where we find ourselves?

Reflect on these questions and more during this engaging presentation as we kick off Social Connection Awareness Week in Wisconsin.

Presenter: Richard Kyte, PhD
Viterbo University

November 10
12-1pm CST
FREE WEBINAR

Register: bit.ly/FindingYourThirdPlace

wiha
Wisconsin Institute
for Healthy Aging
https://wihealthyaging.org

SIGN UP! for Well Connected!

Call or Email Marina Wittmann
ADRC: (608)355-3289
marina.wittmann@saukcountywi.gov

ADRC
505 Broadway St
Baraboo, WI 53913

NOVEMBER INTENTIONS

- Trust the process that everything will fall into place
- Slow down and savour the present moment
- Make time to enjoy the small joys in life
- Do your own thing because you want to and not because you have to
- Give your mind and body the love and attention it deserves
- Don't take things personally just work towards the bestversion of yourself
- Pause and reset

HAPPY STROKES