

WALA ADVOCATE

WISCONSIN ASSISTED LIVING ASSOCIATION • WINTER 2024 VOL. 29 • NO. 3

Possibilities

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INSIDE

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- [Talent Mastery: Strategies You Can Use Today](#)
- [Don't Take the Bait: Outsmarting Today's Phishers](#)

CHAIRPERSON'S CORNER

By Glen Weyenberg, WALA Board Chairperson



The Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA) plays a critical role in guiding the organization's strategy and ensuring that it serves the evolving needs of Wisconsin's assisted living communities. The Board works closely with Mike Pochowski, WALA's President & CEO, and the devoted WALA team to ensure the association's mission is being met. One of WALA's key strengths is the diversity of expertise represented on the board, not only in terms of the types of assisted living facilities but also through a broad range of industry professionals. This variety of expertise ensures that WALA's leadership is equipped to address the many facets of assisted living. I would like to provide a summary of the types of individuals who represent you on the board of directors and the intent-fullness that goes into building a strong board.

WALA's commitment to diverse expertise ensures that the organization's leadership reflects the complexity of the assisted living landscape. The board includes representatives from various types of assisted living facilities, such as independent living, assisted living, memory care, and adult family homes, which ensures that WALA's policies and strategies are informed by the specific challenges and needs of each type of facility.

In addition, WALA includes board members from key professions such as legal, accounting, insurance, supply chain, and medicine management. This wide range of professional expertise enables the organization to tackle the diverse challenges that assisted living communities face, from navigating regulatory changes and managing financial sustainability to innovating in resident care and safety.

The inclusion of professionals from various fields on WALA's board brings critical insights to the table. Legal experts help WALA navigate the complex regulatory environment governing assisted living communities, ensuring compliance with state and federal laws. Accounting professionals contribute to financial planning, offering essential guidance on budgeting, auditing, and managing financial risks, which are crucial for the long-term success of assisted living facilities. Insurance professionals bring expertise in risk management and help develop strategies to protect residents, staff, and facilities from potential liabilities. Supply chain management experts ensure that WALA stays at the forefront of innovation, bringing in the latest technologies and solutions to improve the quality of care.

A particularly valuable addition to the board is expertise in medicine management. Managing medications is a critical aspect of resident care in assisted living communities. Board members with expertise in medicine management ensure that WALA stays informed about best practices in medication administration, regulatory compliance, and safety protocols. This expertise is essential to ensure that residents receive the correct medications at the right times, minimizing the risk of medication errors and improving overall health outcomes.

If you or a representative have interest in serving on various board committees or eventually being a board member, please contact Mike Pochowski.

WALA MISSION STATEMENT

The Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA) is the largest trade association in Wisconsin representing the assisted living profession. Our mission is to support assisted living communities, staff, and residents through advocacy, education, and service.

WISCONSIN ASSISTED LIVING ASSOCIATION

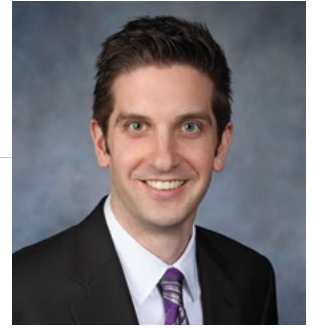
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Erin Boutan, Senior Director, Quality Improvement & Communications
Heather Novoselac, Senior Manager, Event Services & Education
Kayla Goodall, Manager, Membership Operations
Jennifer Hoffman, Workforce Development Director

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CEO CORNER

By Mike Pochowski, WALA President & CEO



Thank you for everything you are doing to provide outstanding care and services to all of your residents. Please know you are doing an amazing job and we are truly thankful for everything you are doing and continue to do.

As we look back on 2024, we have been happy to report a number of advocacy successes:

- Enhancements to the Family Care program such as the continuing implementation of a rate band/rate setting process
- Defeated legislative bills that would have unnecessarily increased regulatory burdens on assisted living providers
- Media coverage regarding the long-term care workforce crisis along with other issues impacting the assisted living profession
- Continuous meetings with legislators, the Governor's office, Department of Health Services (DHS), Division of Medicaid Services (DMS), and the Bureau of Assisted Living (BAL)
- WALA representation on legislative, regulatory, and executive task forces

Looking ahead to next year, we will continue to advocate on your behalf.

One of the ways you can help is through the WALA-PAC. The WALA-PAC enables us to support elected officials, both Democrats and Republicans, who understand assisted living and who are in a position to support policies that enhance the lives of assisted living residents. No contribution is too small and every dollar helps ensure that critical priorities are addressed. A more robust WALA-PAC will support these efforts. You can provide a personal contribution (corporate contributions are not allowed) at ewala.org/advocacy.

In addition, the 2025 membership renewal process is underway. Your WALA membership includes access to great benefits such as legal resources, insurance offerings, job board, and membership discounts. We hope you will continue your membership in 2025 and you can find out more at ewala.org.

We are also looking forward to a number of great events next year including WALA's Annual Conference on February 26, 2025 – February 28, 2025 at the Kalahari Resort in the Wisconsin Dells. Also, we will be having our WALA Advocacy Day on March 18, 2025 in Madison. As always, this is a free event for WALA members. More information to follow.

I hope you and your families have a wonderful holiday season. Thank you for your continued support and membership in WALA, we greatly appreciate it.



WALA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson: Glen Weyenberg, SVA Certified Public Accountants, Madison
Chairperson Elect: Jill Kreider, Azura Memory Care, Milwaukee
Treasurer: Geoff Ebner, Direct Supply, Milwaukee
Secretary: Bob Lightfoot, RN, Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren s.c., Madison
Past Chairperson: Crystal Miller, Frontida Management Group, Kenosha

Erik Barber, Inspiration Ministries Fitchburg, WI
Lore Brownson, New Perspective Senior Living, Eden Prairie, MN
Elizabeth Brzeski, Regency Senior Communities New Berlin, WI
Angie Hildebrant, KSMS Our House Senior Living
Patrice Johnson, Medication Management Partners
Sara Kekula, M3 Insurance Madison WI
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Krista McCook, Mosaic Management Group LLC
Melissa Miller, Koru Health
Joel Moyer, NuCare Senior Living, Appleton, WI
Matt Teresinski, Platinum Communities
Jennifer Ulmer, Brookdale Senior Living

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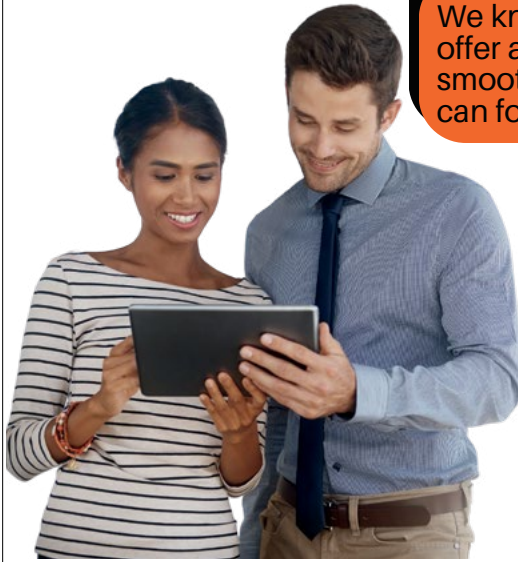
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THE LEGAL EDGE

The Legal Edge is a regular feature column authored by the Assisted Living and Long Term Care Group at the [Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren law firm](#) featuring Bob Lightfoot, RN. Bob Lightfoot can be reached at 608-229-2257 or rlightfoot@reinhartlaw.com.

CAMERAS, VIDEO AND AUDIO MONITORING AND SMART DEVICES IN FACILITIES

Reinhart
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

This installment of “The Legal Edge” may be premature given that the DHS revised memo on the subject has yet to be released (Status: “Currently with DHS Legal”). However, this question comes up with such increasing frequency in my practice, that it seems appropriate to at least give it some thought and guidance with what we know up to this point. First, my understanding after attending a recent DQA/AL Provider meeting is that the prior DQA Memo on Cameras and Recording has been pulled by DHS and is no longer valid or to be relied upon.

Second, we are able to discern very little from Chapter 50 (right to physical and emotional privacy), DHS 83 (not to be filmed, recorded or photographed without consent), DHS 89 (to have privacy) and DHS 88 (right to physical and emotional privacy).

Some states have “Granny Cam” laws ranging from very detailed to very general. Wisconsin does not. As far as I can tell, the only state guidance on the subject comes from a November 15, 2023 PowerPoint presented by Kim Marheine, Wisconsin State Long Term Care Ombudsman at the 2023 DHS FOCUS Conference.

Drawing on Kim’s presentation, there is at least some tangible guidance I’ll summarize below until DHS releases its much-anticipated memo.

1. First is the common-sense notion of “Nevers”. Never in a bathroom. Never at an unclothed resident. Never during personal cares. Never when resident says no.
2. The resident, if competent, controls the device’s use and staff are not responsible for use or maintenance of the device.

3. If a device is proposed to be used without a resident’s control (and I would add – in the case of a resident under guardianship or with an activated health care power of attorney), terms of use must be defined: time and place-limited and frequently evaluated from the resident’s perspective.

4. Use signage to inform others a monitoring device is in use.
5. Involve the Ombudsman if communications aren’t clear or discussions with resident/family regarding a device’s use need to occur.
6. Discuss with resident/family the impact on staff “feeling watched or scrutinized”.

Now let me add my \$0.02. Impress upon families insisting on use of the device for their incompetent or incapacitated loved one, that no one would want to be filmed or recorded while toileting, while being changed or cleaned up, during bathing, or during any intimate procedure like catheter care and determine the reason behind an insistent family’s use of such a device. Be sure the device is not aimed toward a door or common area or a roommate area where use of such device in that manner is probably prohibited. Finally, provide staff training on how the devices are used in your facility. Develop a policy on your acceptable use and incorporate that policy into your admission agreement to discuss with resident/families in advance of admission.

Common sense use of cameras and such devices can be appropriate but not without its limitations. I’ll update this article when the DHS Memo is released.

TALENT MASTERY: STRATEGIES FOR ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT, AND RETENTION

By Dave Molenda, Positive Polarity

In today's competitive market, businesses recognize that talent is their most valuable asset. Mastering the art of talent acquisition, development, and retention is crucial for long-term success. Here are a few key strategies that can help your company excel in these areas.

1. Effective Talent Acquisition: Finding the Right Fit

Acquiring the right talent is the foundation of a successful business. The first step is to create a clear and compelling job description that reflects the company culture, expectations, and growth opportunities. It should not only list skills but also give potential candidates a sense of what it's like to be part of the organization.

Using multiple recruitment channels is another strategy. This includes leveraging social media platforms, professional networks like LinkedIn, industry-specific job boards, and employee referral programs. Offering incentives for referrals can encourage current employees to bring in like-minded and qualified talent.

Streamlining the hiring process is critical; lengthy recruitment cycles can lead to losing top candidates. A mix of behavioral and technical assessments can help identify candidates with both the skills and cultural fit for the organization. Additionally, companies should ensure that the interview process is a two-way conversation, allowing candidates to evaluate if the organization meets their career goals and values. It must be a win/win for both parties.

2. Talent Development: Nurturing Potential

Attracting great talent is only the beginning. Developing employees is essential for retaining them and maximizing their potential. Implementing a robust onboarding process is a vital first step, ensuring new hires feel welcomed and equipped to succeed from day one.

Providing ongoing training and development opportunities is crucial. This can include mentoring programs, leadership development initiatives, and access to online courses or workshops. When possible, companies should encourage a culture of continuous learning where employees are empowered to keep in alignment with evolving industry trends.

Offering a clear career progression path is another effective strategy. Most employees are more likely to stay if they

see opportunities for advancement. Regular performance reviews and goal-setting discussions help in identifying skill gaps and recognizing accomplishments, leading to tailored development plans.

3. Talent Retention: Keeping the Best

Retention hinges on creating a positive work environment where employees feel valued, engaged, and motivated. Compensation is a key factor, but retention goes beyond salaries. Companies need to focus on offering competitive benefits packages, including health insurance, retirement plans, and wellness programs that support work-life balance.

Creating a culture of recognition is also vital. Regularly acknowledging individual and team achievements fosters a sense of belonging and encourages high performance. Additionally, providing flexible working options, and empowerment can significantly enhance employee satisfaction.

Another important aspect of retention is cultivating a feedback-rich environment. Conducting regular employee engagement surveys and acting on the feedback received shows employees that their opinions are valued. Addressing concerns and implementing suggestions can lead to a more engaged and motivated workforce.

Conclusion

Mastering talent acquisition, development, and retention requires a comprehensive strategy that aligns with business goals and company culture. By creating an attractive hiring process, nurturing employees' growth, and building a supportive work environment, companies can foster a loyal and motivated workforce. In a rapidly changing job market, those who invest in their people will find themselves ahead of the competition, ensuring long-term success and sustainable growth.

Dave Molenda, founder of Wisconsin-based Positive Polarity, is a business coach, trainer, author and podcast host committed to helping teams and small businesses experience dynamic growth and success in their personal and professional lives. Join Dave on February 26th as he kicks off the 2025 WALA Annual Conference at the educational pre-event.



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MEET JENNIFER HOFFMAN: WALA DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



WALA is thrilled to welcome a new member to our team who brings a wealth of experience, passion, and dedication to education, community engagement, and relationship building. With a Bachelor's in Elementary Education, Jen combines a strong foundation in education with an extensive background

in recruitment strategies. Her focus on creating strategic partnerships and improving processes aligns perfectly with our mission to engage future generations in exploring careers in Assisted Living.

Previously, she spent 4.5 years with Rogers Behavioral Health, where she successfully developed the campus recruiting function as both the Manager of Campus Relations and Campus Recruiter. During her time there, she connected with students to introduce them to the diverse career paths in mental health. This experience fueled her commitment to raising awareness about careers that make a positive impact—like those in assisted living.

In her new role, one of her objectives will be working to bridge connections between WALA members and local high schools, technical colleges, and universities. Her goal is to facilitate meaningful relationships that give students hands-on insights into assisted living careers. By partnering with our members and our local educational community she hopes to inspire students to see assisted living as a rewarding, impactful career choice.

Jen is actively developing valuable resources for WALA members to support key areas like recruitment, retention, apprenticeships, and tapping into job corps and resettlement agencies as a talent source. With her extensive network in these fields, Jen will be a pivotal resource for WALA members interested in exploring these opportunities and strategies.



On a personal note, Jen and her husband Joe, of 20 years, live in Hartland. They are proud parents of Gabby, a freshman studying Radiological Sciences at Carroll University, and Will, a junior at Arrowhead High School with aspirations in law. Their family is also heavily involved in club volleyball, traveling frequently to support Will's passion for the sport and building wonderful connections with other volleyball families along the way.

Please join us in welcoming her to the team! We are excited to see the impact she will bring in helping our members connect with the next generation of assisted living professionals.

Connect with Jennifer:

jhoffman@ewala.org

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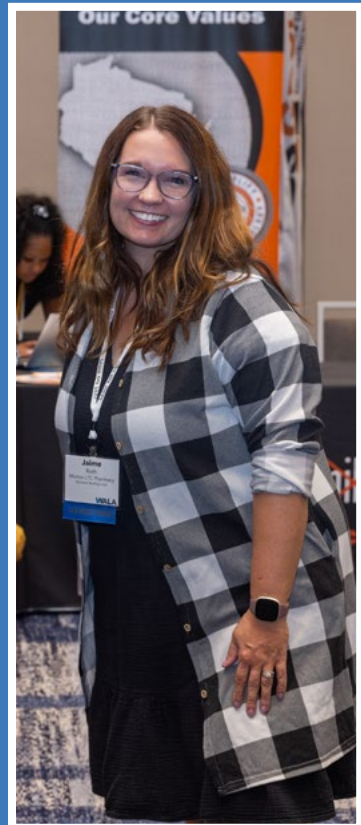


2024 WALA FALL CONFERENCE EMPOWERING

CONFERENCE
HIGHLIGHTS

You





DON'T TAKE THE BAIT: OUTSMARTING TODAY'S PHISHERS

Matthew Thomson, GCIH, GPEN, and CISSP, Director of Cyber Liability, M3 Insurance

Imagine this:

You're working through your emails on a busy Monday morning when you see a message from your company's CEO, marked "Urgent." It requests you to review a confidential document before an important meeting later in the day. Without a second thought, you click the link, eager to help. But instead of opening the file, you unknowingly hand over your login credentials to cybercriminals.

That "urgent" request wasn't from your CEO—it was a cleverly disguised phishing attack, designed to exploit your trust and your time-pressured routine. Phishing schemes like this are increasingly sophisticated, and even the most cautious employee can fall victim if they're not vigilant. So, how do you stay ahead of these threats? Let's dive into how phishing works and how you can protect yourself and your business.



Cyber criminals will stop at nothing to bait an unsuspecting victim into falling for a phishing scheme. Phishing is a social engineering attack that utilizes online messaging platforms, primarily email, to convince the victim to do something like open a malicious file, click a link where they share their login details, change the routing of a payment, or share sensitive information with the attackers. With the average person receiving over 100 emails a day, and our heavy reliance on email communication, it's easy to act impulsively on email content without pausing to question its legitimacy.

Business Email Compromise (BEC), a rapidly growing form of email scam enabled primarily by phishing attacks, targets businesses of all sizes and industries globally, exposing them to potential losses in the billions. According to [Beazley's 2024 cyber risk prediction](#), BEC incidents increased by 35% quarter over quarter in the first quarter of 2024. As seen in the graph below, the top industries impacted by BEC attacks are Professional Services, Healthcare, and Financial Institutions.

Cyber criminals, otherwise referred to as threat actors, are constantly changing their tactics, particularly when it comes to phishing. They will use any and every trick in the book to convince the recipient that the email is legitimate. In addition, the phishing email will play on your emotions such that it gets you to act fast without thinking.

To protect your organization against phishing, one key component to the security program is security awareness training. The purpose of this training should be to create awareness of the threats and grow your organization's culture of security. An effective security awareness program must stay up-to-date with the latest threats and scenarios.

For example, relying on outdated scenarios like the "advance-fee fraud" or "lottery win" is no longer effective. Instead focusing on topics like:

- AI enabling more believable social engineering
- Voice phishing (Vishing) or SMS Phishing (Smishing)
- Fake/fraudulent QR codes

Phishing Testing

Many organizations perform simulated phishing emails to test their employee awareness of social engineering scams. What has often been the determining factor of "success" is mostly focused on reducing the "click rate". However, if the "click rate" is anything greater than 1, that test should be considered a failure for the organization. Is this really the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of your security awareness program?

Using the Carrot instead of the Stick

When considering the intent of phishing training, should the goal be to catch employees and reprimand them for clicking on phishing emails? Or should we focus on raising their awareness and enabling them to act as a digital neighborhood watch? When re-evaluating how to measure success for a phish testing, the primary focus should be on how well employees can identify and report phishing emails and other scams. By having your employees be a "human firewall", it can allow the company's security team to proactively prevent any future teammates from falling victim to the same scam.

TECH TIP *Phish reporting should be like a neighborhood watch, if you see something, say something. Report phishing emails to prevent others from falling victim.*

- Be able to identify the difference between a phish and spam
- Incentivize appropriate reporting of attempted phishing
- Develop a culture of awareness

What to do if you think you are a victim

- Don't provide any information: Exit the malicious site immediately without entering any details.
- Disconnect from the internet: Go offline to stop any potential malware or data theft.
- Check for malware: Run a malware scan on your device to detect and remove any infections.
- Back up your data: Use an external device to back up files after ensuring your device is malware-free.
- Change your passwords: On a separate device, update passwords for any accounts at risk.

- Report the phishing link: Report the scam to protect others after confirming your device is secure.

Key Takeaways

For a security awareness training and phishing testing program to be truly successful, it requires support from every level of the organization. By clearly defining the program's goals and regularly updating it to address evolving threats, you can ensure that your security awareness efforts effectively contribute to keeping your organization cyber-safe.

Reach out to your [M3 Client Executive](#) to discuss your current protection for your organization and to learn more about cybersecurity risk management.

WALA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: AMANDA NARLOCH, DIRECTOR OF NURSING AT THE ELIZABETH RESIDENCE ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY IN FRANKLIN



Amanda Narloch, Director of Nursing at the Elizabeth Residence Assisted Living Community in Franklin, has spent her life dedicated to providing the highest quality care to her residents.

Starting out as a utility aid at age 16, Amanda transitioned to being a caregiver, earning her CNA and eventually going to school to become a nurse. This December marks her 20th anniversary working for Elizabeth Residence.

Amanda's grandparents were a prominent presence in raising her as a child and when her grandmother was admitted to a nursing home it made an impact on Amanda.

"It was a sad setting and just thought I could make a difference," Amanda said of her grandmother's nursing home experience and what prompted her interest in long-term care.

Amanda enrolled in a certified nursing assistant (CNA) course while in high school and started working at Elizabeth Residence at the end of her junior year. Within a few years of graduating from high school, Amanda became pregnant and gave birth to a son who is autistic. It only strengthened her resolve to be an advocate and caregiver not only for her son, but others as well.

"I wanted to be an advocate for those who can't speak for

themselves or that need help," Amanda said. "Elizabeth Residence has been a fantastic place to work. You just want people to be happy and feel protected. I have a genuine love for helping people."

That love shows in the way Amanda goes out of her way to improve the quality of life for her residents, from taking personal time to shop for new clothes for them at Goodwill to planning bowling trips for residents. Earlier this year, Amanda was previously awarded the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association's (WALA) Hero Award for the exceptional care she provides to residents.

As director of nursing, Amanda provides impactful advice and mentorship to her colleagues, some of whom are still students, beginning career paths in long-term care. She also offers emotional support to her colleagues during periods of high stress or the loss of a beloved patient. Amanda finds joy in using her decades of experience and nursing acumen to mentor and encourage others.

This year, Amanda helped organize the Elizabeth Residence's Senior Homecoming event where residents get the opportunity to dress their best and socialize with their friends and neighbors. Amanda loves spending time getting to know her patients and making a difference in their quality of life.

"The residents make you feel good, there's a lot of hugs and it just makes you feel good," Amanda said.

Congratulations on your 20 year anniversary, Amanda!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2024 HEATHER BRUEMMER AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to the [2024 Heather Bruemmer Award for Assisted Living Quality](#) Winners! This year, two Diamond Accreditation Program winners were selected as award recipients. These locations represent the legacy of Heather Bruemmer by demonstrating going above and beyond to provide quality care to residents in their care.

Supportive Living Community Winner: Deer Path Integrated Living

[Deer Path Integrated Living](#) recognizes the unique learning styles, beliefs, and needs of individuals by creating personalized, one-on-one plans for residents that focus on both short-term and long-term goals. These plans are regularly evaluated and adjusted, accompanied by an incentive program tailored to residents' evolving needs. Staff are trained to emphasize holistic care, promoting personal growth and well-being. Feedback from residents reflects appreciation for the compassionate staff, who provide guidance, support relationship-building, and help advocate for individual needs.

The community actively seeks to enhance knowledge and methods that benefit residents, especially those with mental illness and substance use disorders, through a behavior support education program and by employing specialists such as a Doctor of Psychology and a Trauma Services Specialist. Staff are encouraged to pursue continuing education to improve resident care. In challenging situations, staff go above and beyond to secure external support and assist with crisis interventions, ensuring residents feel respected and valued beyond their diagnoses.

Deer Path is dedicated to fostering a compassionate environment where residents feel understood and can openly share their needs. A person-centered approach is employed, with regular collaboration among management and treatment teams to enhance care and maintain communication. Staff also connect residents with local resources and advocate for them in cases of denied benefits or restrictive guardianship. Additionally, they support residents transitioning to independent living by providing continued services until residents feel ready to maintain their independence. Education serves as the foundation of Deer Path's approach, with staff trained in crisis prevention and trauma-informed practices. The community celebrates all successes in residents' recovery journeys, reinforcing their commitment to supporting residents through challenges. Positive resident feedback emphasizes the reliability, effective communication,



WALA's 83.15 CBRF ADMINISTRATOR COURSE

April 2025: Brookfield (Milwaukee area)

Week 1: April 8, 9, 10
Week 2: April 15, 16, 17
Week 3: April 23 + 24

June 2025: Madison

Week 1: June 3, 4, 5
Week 2: June 10, 11, 12
Week 3: June 18 + 19

October 2025: Deforest (Madison area)

Week 1: October 7, 8, 9
Week 2: October 14, 15, 16
Week 3: October 22 + 23



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and understanding nature of the staff. A former resident recently visited to express gratitude for the community's impact on their successful transition to independent living, illustrating the profound difference Deer Path makes in the lives of its residents.

**Senior Living Community Winner:
Waterford Senior Living and Memory Care**

[Waterford Senior Living](#) has effectively implemented concepts from Certified Dementia Practitioner training, funded by the HCBS grant, by creating designated activity spaces that include a music room, small group areas, a resident gym, an arts-café, a sensory area, living room, and an indoor garden with a butterfly garden. These spaces, developed with input from residents & team members, have enhanced resident engagement and reduced the need for PRN psychotropic medications. Smaller group settings and increased activity options have fostered resident socialization and allowed for more personalized attention without increasing staff hours.

The organization encourages staff input, considering front-line team members, residents, and families as valuable experts. Resident-created art and thoughtfully selected decor contribute to a welcoming environment that reflects the community's commitment resident well-being and team pride. The team also advocates for resident needs by coordinating with families, health professionals, and managed care organizations to ensure best practices are upheld.



Empathy and kindness are central to interactions with families, who are offered multiple tours and consultations with Community Relations, Executive Directors, and Wellness Directors. This approach helps build supportive relationships, offering families ample time to process transitions. Ongoing support continues with comprehensive conferences on significant resident changes, and families can request specific team members for hospital or rehab visits to provide continuity and comfort.

Join WALA in congratulating these two exceptional assisted living communities as we recognize their accomplishments at the 2025 WALA Annual Conference, February 26-28



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HUMANS ARE GREAT STORYTELLERS

By James Robilotta

"I am not good enough."
"I am not smart enough."
"I am not funny enough."
"I am not successful enough."
"My truck isn't tall enough."

The voices inside your head are often quite loud. Self-talk often keeps you from believing in yourself, trusting yourself, advocating for yourself, and asking for help. Negative thoughts playing on a loop impact your ability to show up fully for others. Humans are great storytellers. What are the stories you are telling yourself?

Stories are powerful. Since Homo Erectus started grunting at each other, painting cave walls, and using grandiose hand gestures in front of the fire, stories have been the way lessons, history, and ideas have been shared. Stories are the invisible strings that connect us. We all know what makes a great story, too: an intriguing cast of characters, a moment of tension, defeat, some sort of takeaway and triumph. Take that framework and apply it to the stories you tell yourself.

You are the main character. Sometimes you are the protagonist, the hero who will come out on top. The antagonist could be an annoying brother, a roommate, an ex, an ignorant individual, or the person that cut you off in traffic. These are the stories when you believe in yourself. In these stories, you know you have the ability to overcome whatever or whoever is standing in your way. At the end your head is held high, and you feel accomplished. When was the last time you felt like that? When was the last time you were proud of yourself?

Other times you perceive the protagonist of the story to be somebody else, maybe that guy in the gym, a senior or alum, someone you follow on social media, an older brother, or a younger sister. You see yourself as the antagonist in these

moments. These are the stories when you are the villain and do not believe in yourself. You do not think you are ready or equipped enough to become the hero of your story. You tell yourself you will never be the protagonist, and you feel a sense of shame. When was the last time you felt like that? When was the last time you were ashamed of yourself?

Woof! That got a little dark, but stick with me!

Here's the beautiful thing: you are the one holding the pen that is writing your story. You are in control of how you perceive the other characters. You are in control of how much energy you give to each situation. And you are in control of how you think about yourself as you fall asleep each night.

Life coach and fellow speaker, Stacy Nadeau, loves to say, "Fact-check your inner critic." Look back at the statements at the beginning of this article.

Brother, you decide what is enough. And enough does not mean that you are settling or throwing in the towel. It means allowing yourself to take a few breaths, lower your shoulders, look around, and see that you have grown in so many ways. Are you done? No. But can you be proud of what you have already done without worrying about what you will or will not do next? Yes.

So one more time for the people in the back: humans are great storytellers. What stories are you telling yourself that you believe?



James Robilotta is a professional speaker, author of [Leading Imperfectly](#), and currently resides in St. Paul, MN with his wife (a fellow speaker!), Tina, their curious 4-year-old, Roam, and delightfully opinionated 18-month-old, Adelina. Learn more at [JamesTRobo.com](#). Join James and WALA at the 2025 Annual Conference, where he will open with his keynote address, [Find Your Third Place: A Work/Life Balance Conversation That's Actually Helpful](#).



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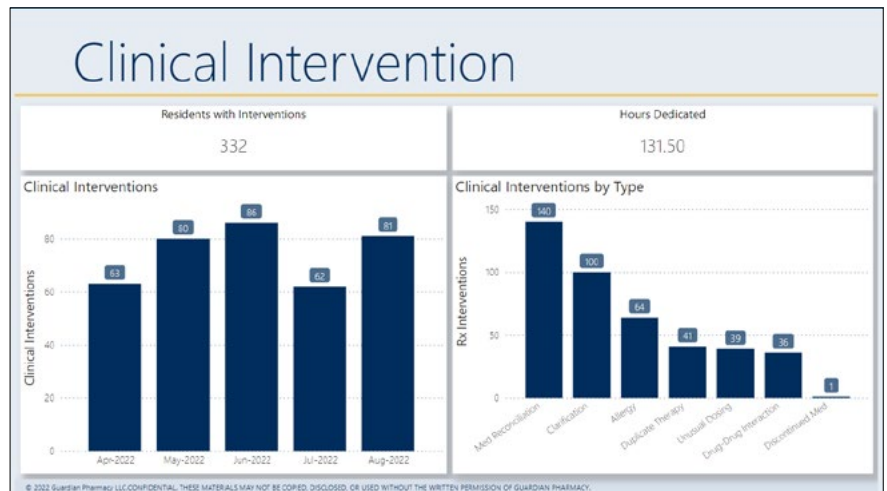
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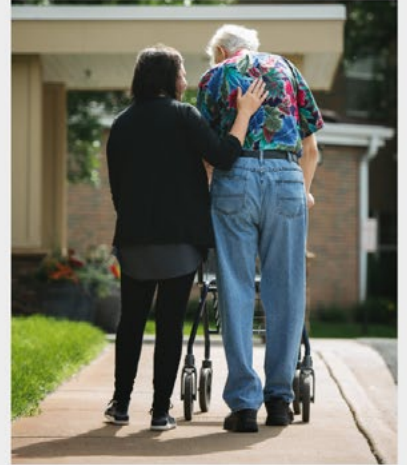
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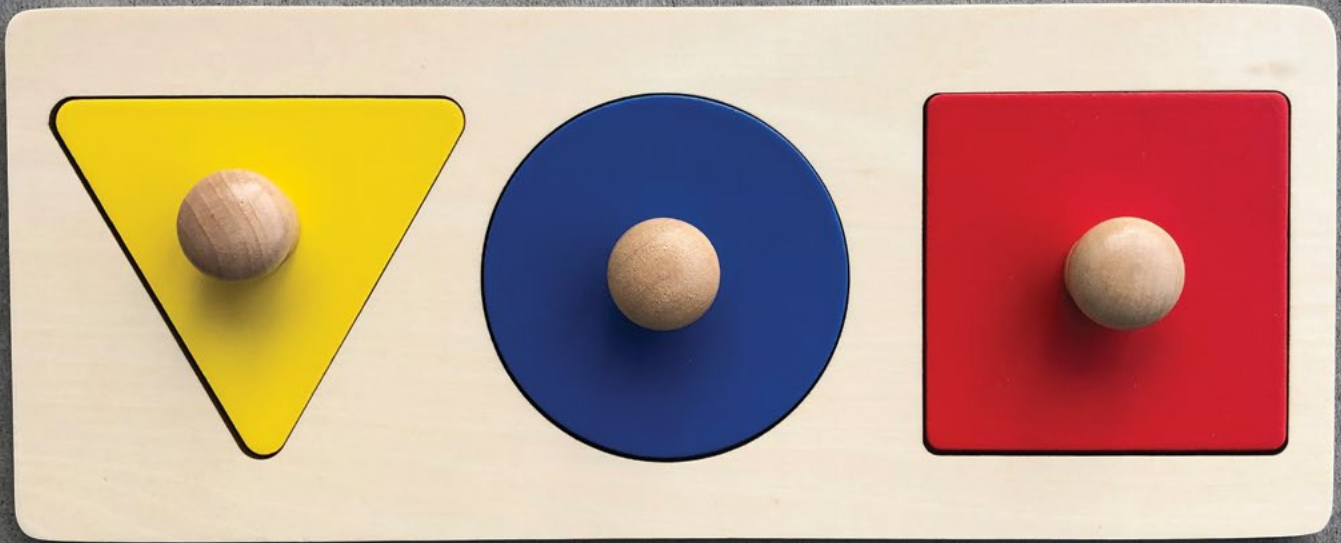


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8 "BAD" HABITS THAT BUILD RESILIENCE

THESE NOT-SO-BAD BEHAVIORS CAN ACTUALLY MAKE YOU BETTER

Courtney Clark



Many culturally-endorsed behaviors we think are good - like always maintaining a positive attitude, or being a hard worker - aren't always good FOR us. Expectations we place on ourselves may in fact drain our strength and our mental energy, so that we aren't able to be resilient when it really matters.

Here are 9 habits that get a bad rap, and why you should reconsider adding them back into your daily routine:

Not-So-Bad Habit #1: Complain

The world gives bonus points to happy people who don't gripe, but sharing our struggles with the people around us can be beneficial. It helps us bond and puts our problems in perspective. The key is to communicate your stress but not dwell TOO long on the problem before moving to a solution, to avoid venting. In small doses and to the right people, complaining can help you feel supported, understood, and ready to move forward.

Not-So-Bad Habit #2: Daydream

Thinking about the future is critical for surviving stressful times. Studies of children from difficult backgrounds showed that the children who succeeded despite the odds had something called a "future-orientation." When you shift your focus toward the future and start making plans, your brain starts to make meaning out of your current struggle, and use it as fuel to get you where you want to go.

Not-So-Bad Habit #3: Procrastinate

Some deadlines can't be missed, but others are self-imposed out of some idea of what "successful people" do. It's 100% okay, and even smart, to move deadlines that don't make sense anymore.

Not-So-Bad Habit #4: Say No

I like to think of myself as a nice, helpful person. I hate saying no. As a result, I've often spent my days completely overcommitted and overwhelmed. Then a smart friend passed on this bit of advice: "Every yes is a no to something else." When you say yes to something just to be nice, or because you think you should, you're taking up time for a future activity or opportunity that would be more meaningful to you.

Not-So-Bad Habit #5: Goof Off

When your stress level is high, it might seem like goofing off is the last thing you should do. But under extreme stress, your brain floods your body with adrenaline and cortisol, sending you into a biological panic mode. By goofing off

and doing something enjoyable, like laughing at an internet video, you move your brain out of stress mode and into high-performance mode.

Not-So-Bad Habit #6: Be Weak

There's a common belief that tough people survive traumatic events with grace and poise, never wavering or having a moment's doubt. After facing cancer four times and surviving a brain aneurysm, I know from experience that's a lie. If we suffer in silence - because we don't want to appear pathetic or we don't want to burden anyone else - then each one of us believes that WE are the only one who is weak. Instead, be honest about your fears and doubts and you'll likely find you're in good company.

Not-So-Bad Habit #7: Be Selfish

A lot of the narrative about "good people" includes the belief that good people spend their time and resources on other people. A "good parent" is there for her kids 24 hours a day. A "good employee" works late and on weekends. But being 100% selfless is completely unsustainable over the long term. Prioritizing your own needs can be a kindness to other people in your life, because it allows you to do good work, behave with patience, and enjoy the world around you.

Not-So-Bad Habit #8: Give Up

Despite years of hearing that "persistence pays off," emerging research shows that truly successful people know how to give up when a plan isn't working out. By giving up on an activity instead of banging your head against the wall, you can make room in your life for a path that will work. Replace a dead-end path with a detour, and you won't feel the sting of giving up. Instead, you'll feel the excitement of success!

Throw away the rulebook: these bad habits will help you build more resilience and find greater happiness. As with everything, these bad habits should be taken in moderation. But by resetting your expectation of what is "good," you'll find yourself doing a lot more things that are good FOR you.

Courtney Clark believes that giving up is one of the best ways to get what you want out of life. She is a four-time World Trade Center-related cancer survivor, a brain aneurysm survivor, keynote speaker, and founder of a nonprofit. Courtney works with people to build resilience and ReVisionary Thinking™, so they can adapt faster and achieve more. For more information about building adaptability in your team, visit CourtneyClark.com

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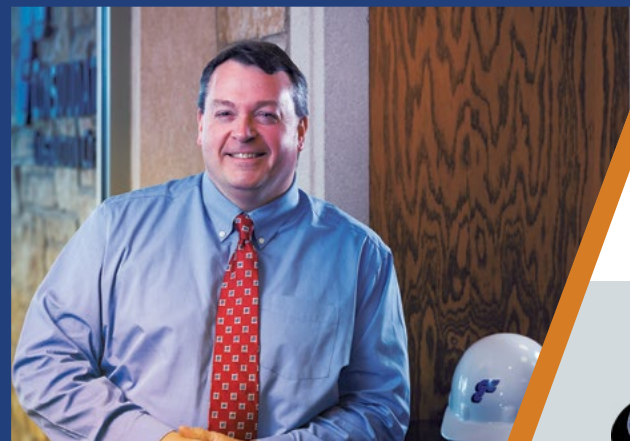
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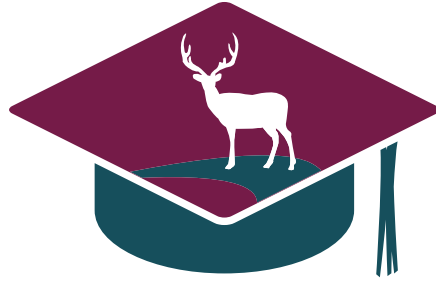
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