

PRESENCE



“The best way to prevent harm is through a sharp focus on the tools that have been bestowed upon us. **First, our intention has to be to bring and share the gifts of creating a sense of security and a feeling of being loved.** Then, within these parameters, caregivers have to become intuitively practiced and skilled at teaching these good memories. This approach is in and of itself the most encompassing way to prevent violence. The more specific description of this approach is to: **Make sure that our presence is reflective of peace, tranquility, and companionship.** When the person sees a caregiver, the immediate reaction should eventually be, “Wow, my favorite person is this person. All will be fine.” This involves the expression of friendliness throughout the day witnessed in smiling, a relaxed face, little sweet nothings, the recognition of the person’s presence and goodness, and a taking advantage of every opportunity to recognize the person’s goodness. **Make sure that our words uplift the brokenhearted person.** Each word should float out of the caregiver’s mouth like a hug with deep warmth and authenticity. Our words should be wrapped in warmth and always uplift and never criticize and at the same time ring out with a loving rhythm and a kind tone. Our basic tools are essential in teaching each person a new memory of feeling safe and loved. They are often marked by the following characteristics: quietude, slowness, authenticity, positivism, supportiveness, sweetness, empathy, and an embrace of unconditional love.

The idea of Gentle Teaching’s giving of unconditional love scares those trained in the behavioral approach. Our use of unconditional love is almost like a chokehold that goes against the long held insistence that we must not reinforce the person for maladaptive behaviors; our supposed duty is to deliver reprimands and other forms of punishment. The caregiver has to do everything possible to prevent violence and a large part of this prevention is a willingness to “give in” as long as there is no serious side effect to giving in. The caregiver is sharply alert and can almost predict when violence might occur. **The caregiver has to be acutely aware that the central task of care giving is to nurture the person though freely expressing unconditional love.”**

-John McGee, ‘Joy & Sorrow’ (2012)

“Don’t let your online presence be greater than your real life presence.”

- 1** In our day and age it is easy to lose sight of our presence. Many of us are captivated by how many “likes” we get on our latest posts, or how many followers that we have on any given social-media platform. In what ways are we able to engage all of ourselves in whatever or whoever is before us?
- 2** As a team, spend some time breaking down the concept of your presence in the house that you serve, in the context of your team and in your personal life.
- 3** It has been said that our presence is a present: what are a few things that we need to do to bring our attention back to those in front of us? What do you find stops you from giving your whole-presence to others?