

Mercy High School
Counseling Department

GOOD NEWS

November 2020



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2020

GOOD NEWS

November, 2020

EVEN IN THE
DARKEST TIMES,
EVEN WHEN YOU
CAN'T SEE IT, THINGS
ARE STILL GROWING.

MAYBE YOU ARE
GROWING, TOO.

@POSITIVELYPRESENT



9TH GRADE MONTHLY MEET UP

All 9th graders will connect with their
Crews and Link Leaders via Zoom
NOVEMBER 11TH, 1:15PM

JUNIOR COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

Parents of Mercy 11th graders are invited to
attend a College Planning Kick-Off webinar
on November 11th.

NOVEMBER 11TH, 12:00PM

After this webinar, each Junior student and
their parents/guardians are invited to
schedule a Junior College Interview. This
meeting is to continue individualized college
planning, with their Counselor.

NOVEMBER-FEBRUARY

THANKSGIVING BREAK

No School!

NOVEMBER 23RD-27TH

IMPORTANT

Dates

IN NOVEMBER

REMOTE WEEK

All classes will meet remotely
(online), following the
Monday-Friday Hybrid Schedule
**NOVEMBER 30TH-
DECEMBER 4TH**

Mental Health

Maintenance

Making healthy choices for our **mental well-being** is equally as important as the choices we make for our physical health. For physical health maintenance, we should be doing things like scheduling regular check-ups with a physician, taking vitamins, and tending to our basic health needs (like eating, sleeping, and physical activity), right? Here are 3 ways **we should be implementing mental health maintenance into our lives at all times** and especially during this time.

1. FEEL ALL THE FEELS

Although this advice pertains to humans of all ages, it is important to highlight our students, as teenagers tend to feel things deeply (thanks, hormones!)-both negative emotions and feelings that are positive in nature. Unfortunately, even though we've lived through our own rollercoasters of teenage emotions, adults often forget just how intense a ride it can be.

The worst thing you can do (EVER. And especially now.) is ignore your negative feelings. Don't get me wrong, I get that throughout the day, we often have a certain front we need to keep up and cannot always engage with our negative

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feelings. With that said, in order to maintain a **healthy emotional balance**, we must revisit those postponed feelings later. We often receive messages from adults or media that tapping into our feelings makes us weak. Contrary to this belief, flexing our mental health muscles by feeling our feelings, actually makes us **stronger**. Feel them, talk about them, write about them, cry over them, scream about them...we've got to do whatever we need to do to feel our feelings as they are.

It is equally as important right now, to tap into our positive feelings. No matter how small or momentary they may be, we have got to celebrate our small successes, engage any silver linings we are able to see, and roll around in the warmth that moments of love, fun, laughter, and comfort bring to us. Whenever a positive feeling presents itself, let's sit in that as long as we can; talk about it; write about it; remind ourselves of it later.

Then there are the complex feelings about our current reality that are **both** negative and positive. Let's feel those too! Especially if we can compartmentalize and separate the two. For example, we might find our remote learning days to feel longer, less engaging, and more challenging, AND at the same time, we may notice that having to manage these days has resulted in an improvement in our individual organization or time management skills. (anyone?) One feeling does not cancel out the other-embracing that small organizational success does not make the stress or frustration surrounding remote days go away. Both feelings exist, so we should allow ourselves to feel them both.

Ignoring or avoiding our negative feelings will only allow them to build up and take away our control of when they show up

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again (and when they do, they will be louder and more negative than before!). Not embracing our positive feelings will minimize those experiences, potentially leading us to feeling like we only have negative feelings in our life, leading to overwhelm and possibly, hopelessness. We need to recognize and cope with the awful stuff and also, squeeze all of the juice out of the good stuff. Especially right now.

2.FILL UP YOUR TOOL BELT

One of the best gifts we can give ourselves is an arsenal of coping methods. This is a list of activities, actions, people, places, or things that **make us feel good** that we can utilize when we are feeling bad. We literally should have a list-a piece of paper, a doc, a note on our phone, etc. in order to establish an effective belt full of tools. Simply keeping a mental list in our brains will not work as well. Why? Because when we are overwhelmed or in a negative space, this information is less likely to be accessible to us as our brains will be flooded with hormones and thoughts causing our negative feelings in the first place. In those moments, we need something physical to lay our eyes on; a list of items to choose from.

Once we have our list, we can then respond to negative feelings and life stressors by using one of our coping methods. Once we feel that method calm us down, soothe our worries, or shift our mood, we can return to the moment in a better head space. The trick to filling up your coping skill tool belt is finding methods that work for you-and this will differ from person to person. Not sure where to start? I'll share my list with you on the next page for you to springboard from.

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MY COPING SKILLS

- *Listen to My Happy Playlist
- *Yoga
- *4x4 Breathing
- *Take the dog for a walk
- *Talk to Jeremy, Carly, Sara, or Shannon
- *Journal
- *Watch hilarious Tik Toks
- *Color
- *Run

Remember, this is *my* list. Feel free to try on some of these methods for yourself, although you should only include those actions that *work for you* in your [Coping Skills List](#).

3.BE A MENTAL HEALTH WARRIOR

Once we've worked Steps 1 and 2, we can look for opportunities to be a Mental Health Warrior. Being a Mental Health Warrior means staying informed about accurate mental health information, [striving to stay mentally healthy](#), and committing to helping others stay mentally health as well.

Always, and especially now, Mental Health Warriors are needed. Everyone is living their own version of different or difficult right now. We MHWs need to keep an eye out for those around us who are in need mental health maintenance. Let's notice them, encourage them, help them learn to cope with life, and offer to stand by their side while they do so.

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Trish Brown

2ND SEMESTER

Schedule Changes

When can I request 2nd semester changes?

Counselors will accept

2021 Spring Semester

Schedule Change Request Forms

from December 1st through December 10th. This form can be found in the Counseling course in Schoology and should be submitted to your assigned Counselor via email.

What changes cannot be made?

We cannot grant the following requests:

*Request for a specific Teacher

*"Change of mind" requests that require more than a course drop and a course add.

(For example, If a student wishes to move from Acting 1 7th hour, to Swim/Gym 7th hour, and there is room in the new course, this may be granted. If this request required dropping a 7th hour Acting 1 to then move into Swim/Gym during a different class period, this will not be granted.)

*Change of assigned cohort requests

*Requests to be added to a course that is full
(max number of students are already enrolled)

*Requests to be added to a course that will result in cohort imbalance.

How will I know if my request has been granted?

Once the Schedule Change Committee (comprised of Counselors and Administrators) has reviewed and investigated your request, you will receive an email from your assigned Counselor. This email will either provide a decision with explanation, or will request/suggest additional options to be explored.

more than a

HALLWAY

Mercy's halls vary in color and decor, often displaying **messages of positivity** and upcoming event promotion. As we travel our one-way routes from class to class, we may often pass right by the exact message or piece of information we need that day.

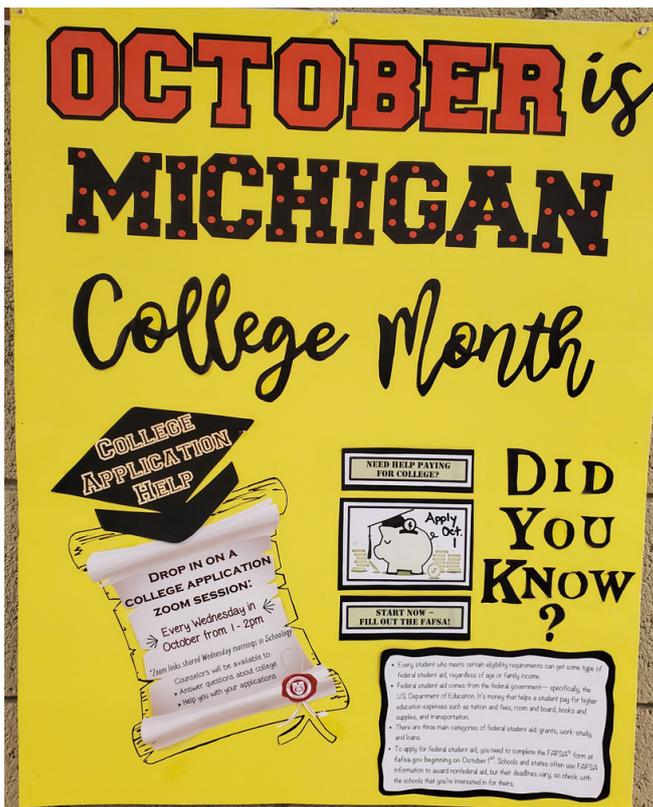
Counseling Support Specialist, Mrs. Burek, contributes endless creativity and encouragement through her bulletin boards and posters each year, filling the Counseling/IT hallway with Mercy Love.

In case you have not been able to take a moment to appreciate her work, I'd like to highlight the greatness that is currently displayed in our beautiful hallway.

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Trish Brown

COLLEGE MONTH

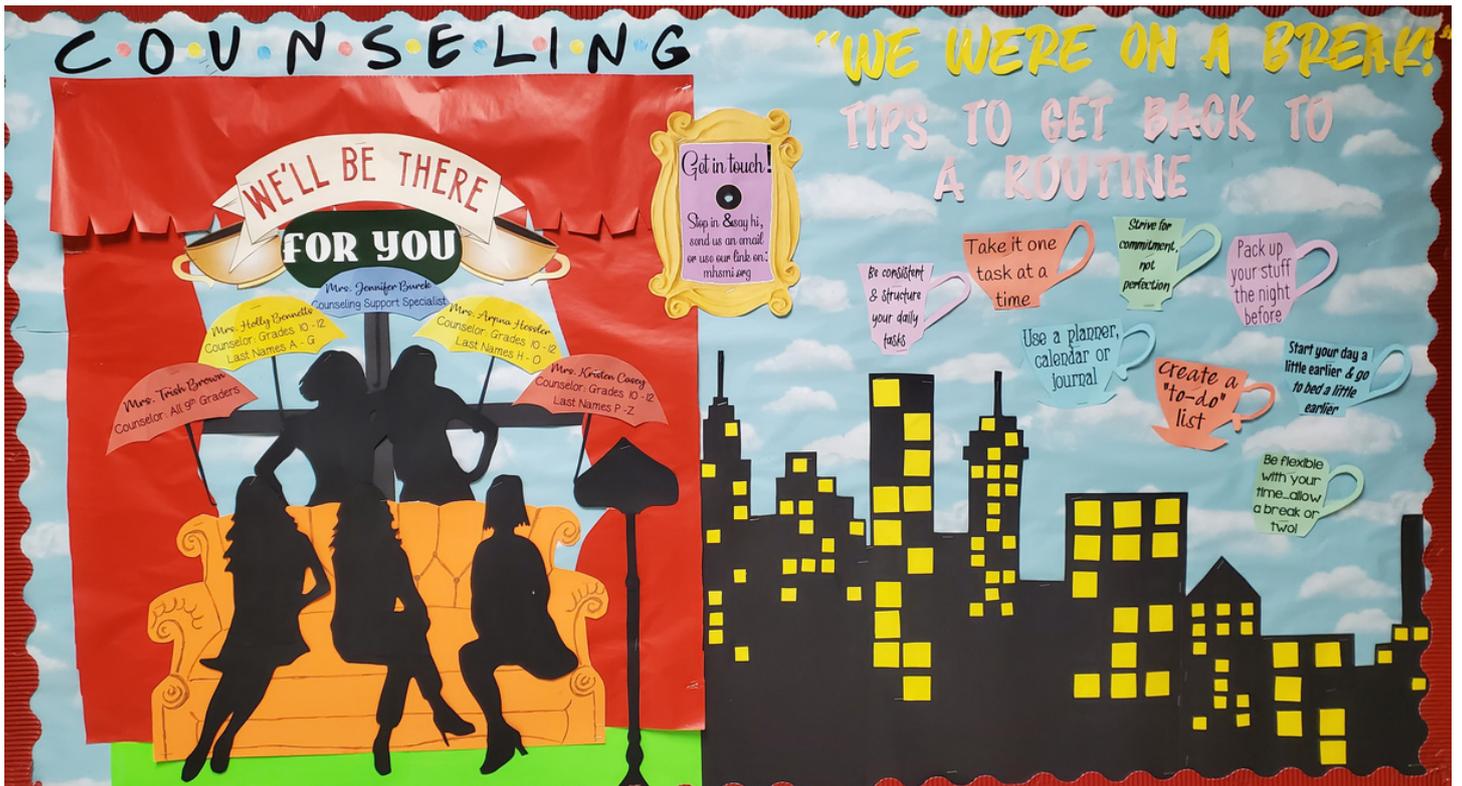
October is commonly recognized as a month long vessel of promotional information and celebration of college-going culture in a High School. Anticipating the college search and application process can sometimes feel kind of heavy. Mrs. Burek always uses her Pinterest worthy skills to shine light on the positive aspects of this exciting time!

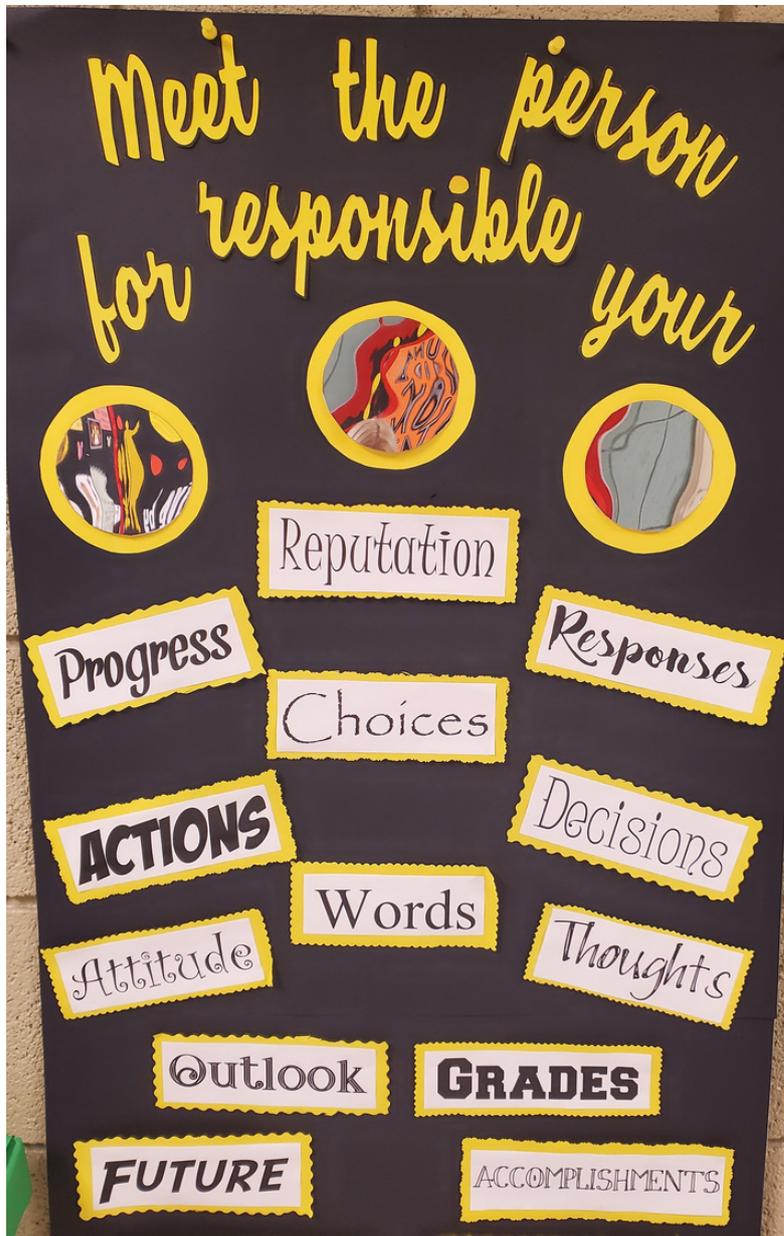




No caption needed.
I think she could make any theme into an adorable board of information and inspiration.

COUNSELING SERVICES





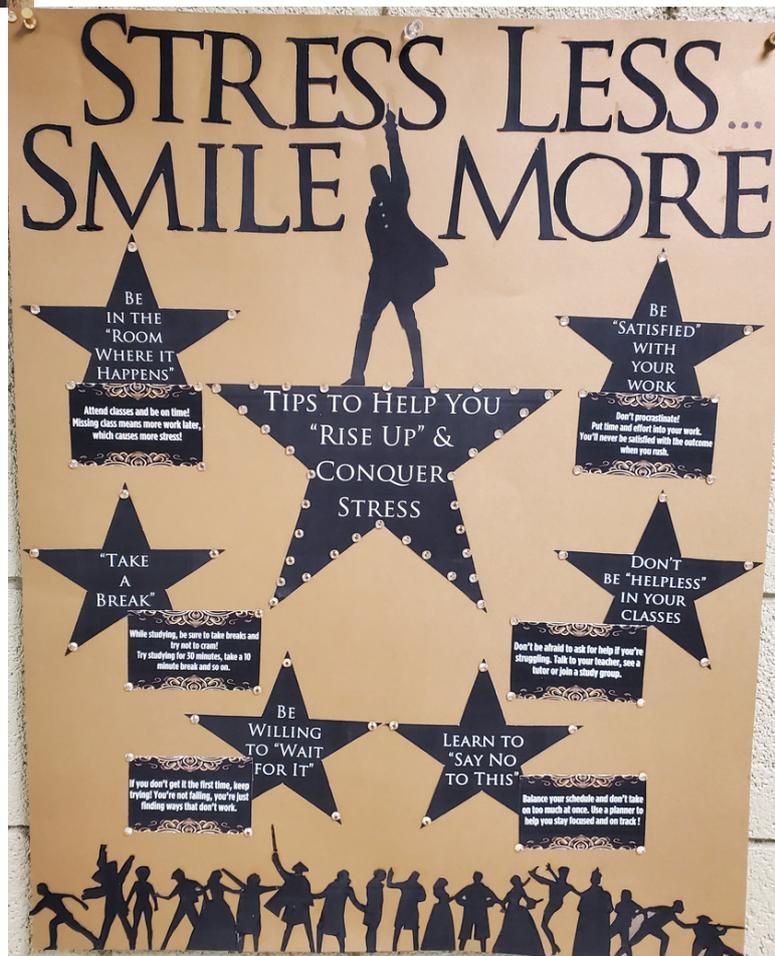
ENCOURAGING PERSONAL GROWTH

I love the idea that if a student takes a moment to pay attention to the items hanging in our hall, they would end up smiling, or exhaling, or more informed because she did.

STRESS RELIEF

What themes or styles would you love to challenge Mrs. Burek to recreate?
 What information, images, or messages would you like to see displayed in our hall?

Send your ideas to tmbrown@mhsmi.org and you may inspire Mrs. Burek's next hallway creation!





ACT & SAT for the Class of 2022 and Beyond



Right now we are hearing quite a lot about testing in the college process. One of the most frequent questions I get from non-senior families is when do we start thinking about the ACT/SAT for college. College admissions professionals, and the testing agencies themselves, recommend testing in the spring of the junior year.

The notion that students should be testing early and often is a myth. Rather, research supports that the best preparation for either test is the curriculum in high school. This year, in particular it is important to not test before the spring so seniors can have seats for tests. While many colleges have gone test optional, not all have, and they may need a test for their school.

How can you prepare? Focus on your classes. If you are a junior, take advantage of the free, full-length tests offered by Princeton Review or the other test prep companies.

Princeton Review ACT Practice

Princeton Review SAT Practice

How are these tests helpful? Having this information will help your counselor determine which test is best for each student. There is no preferred test by colleges, so it is best to prepare for and take the test that suits you best.

Remember, the test is only one factor in admissions, and as schools move to test optional, it may not even be a factor for the college application experience for your Marlin.

THE JUNIOR COLLEGE ADVENTURE

Dear Junior Parents,

Junior year is typically the year where the college process takes more shape.

While each student's path is a bit different, there are milestones in the process that all students will move through.

Mercy's Counselors will speak about the process in detail during our **Junior Parent Kick-Off** program on November 11th from 12:00pm - 1:00 pm. This will be offered via Zoom, pre-registration is required, and a recording of the presentation will be shared with those junior parents unable to attend.

For now, here is a list of less than 10 tips to help you navigate this adventure, alongside your Junior daughter:

1. **Standardized Testing** (ACT/SAT/Subject Tests and Test Optional). It is recommended that students take an ACT or SAT in the 2nd semester of the junior year. Please note, many schools have gone test-optional for college admissions. Colleges that require tests will accept either.
2. **College Planning meeting.** Each Mercy junior student and family will have an opportunity to meet with their Counselor starting November through February. This meeting is intended to initiate an individualized application process for your daughter. Details on scheduling these Zoom meetings will be sent out via email after our November 11th meeting.
3. **Talk college** - but focus on traits, not names. This is a great time to start discussing types of colleges. Talk with your daughter about her Mercy experience - both in and out of the classroom. Ask her about what she wants to continue in college and what new experiences she is looking for. Don't focus on a list of specific schools just yet-instead, focus on characteristics, which will help provide a roadmap for list building later.
4. **Go to a College Fair or Virtual Events.** Colleges have done an excellent job of pivoting to virtual offerings. The best place to learn about virtual offerings is on the College website. Any college fairs we are made aware of will be posted in Schoology.

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5. **Create an application to-do list.** In the late Spring, we will meet with the Class of 2022 to discuss a college to-do list. It is too early to do this now, as application and process changes from the colleges are not published until mid-late Spring.
6. **Finances.** Take time to figure out exactly what resources are available for college. When list building begins understanding finances will be important for you and your daughter. As your family moves through this process, real numbers are essential.
7. **Relax.** We live in a culture that creates an unnecessary frenzy around the college application adventure. The frenzy creates a feeling of urgency and missing out. This can frame the journey through a lens of fear.

****Your daughter is not behind, and she will not miss anything****

Applications are not even widely available until August 1st. Encourage your daughter to spend time reflecting on the high school experience; setting goals for the future; and dreaming about what is next for her. This reflection sets an excellent stage for her college application adventure.

Perhaps most important of all:

8. **Encourage your child to reach out** to her Mercy Counselor with college related questions or worries. College representatives are also more than happy to speak with students, so help your daughter draft email communications to the admissions office.
9. When you start to feel overwhelmed with what might be ahead, **pause, take a deep breath and try to enjoy the adventurous moment you are in with your daughter.**

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Holly Bennetts

Tiny Boxes

Breaking Out of the “Little Boxes” in College Admission

by Rick Clark

Before we had staff living all over the country, and before we employed part-time readers to assist in file review, we had a fun tradition during reading season. Several times a week, we'd gather in my office and someone would share a funny YouTube video. This is how I was first exposed to John Mulaney, Mike Birbiglia, and this gem. It was a great way to start a long day or night of reading in committee.

Recently, I've incorporated this concept at home. Each night while we're cleaning the kitchen after dinner someone gets to pick a clip to share. Some Good News, Trey Kennedy, and Hamilton have all made some good runs, but lately we've been on a Walk Off The Earth kick.

Last night's clean-up was inordinately long and YouTube rolled us from Hey Ya to Little Boxes.

*Little boxes on the hillside
Little boxes made of ticky tacky
Little boxes on the hillside
Little boxes all the same
There's a pink one and a green one
And a blue one and a yellow one
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same
And the people in the houses
All went to the university
Where they were put in boxes
And they came out all the same*

Written by Malvina Reynolds and popularized by Pete Seeger the campy rhythm, simple lyrics, and refrain of “all the same” really sticks with you. Brilliantly, maddeningly, intentionally—with ticky tacky-- it sticks with you. It rattles around in your mind, until you almost want to shout, “A box-dominated life is no life at all!” 2020!!



Photo: iStock

Americans will experience vast variation in emotional response to the 2020 Election results; from tweets of joy and celebratory smiles at the water bottle fountain; to memes of despair and disappointed eyes, peeking out from behind protective masks. Reactions may be very self-concerned or personal in nature, or could be rooted in support for a loved one or cherished cause. Regardless of where we each fall on the political spectrum or what feelings transpire in response to the results, we will all need some post-Presidential-Election recovery time.

These next few pages contain some suggestions and additional resources, to help you cope with your own political stress and fatigue.

★ L ★ E ★ T ★ I ★ T ★ O ★ U ★ T ★

The worst thing one can do with heavy feelings is to hold them in or ignore them. Take the emotions swirling around in your head and weighing heavy on your heart, and choose a healthy avenue to put them out into the world. You can do this by **talking** to a trusted, willing, non-biased individual or by **writing** down your thoughts and feelings as a method of emotional release.

Not sure where to start? Here are some prompts:

***I AM FEELING...**

happy sad angry joyful disappointed relieved worried
encouraged discouraged exhausted inspired
confused hurt proud uncertain hopeful scared

...AND HERE ARE THE REASONS WHY

Students are always welcome to share their individual feelings with a Mercy Counselor. Additionally, student forums and safe spaces will be provided during the school days immediately following the confirmed results of the 2020 Presidential Election.

REDUCE HEADLINE STRESS

Check in with yourself regarding how much post-election political content you are consuming. This may be a great time to engage in a **digital detox**. Perhaps step away from social media and the 24 hour news cycle that will no doubt be flooded with political and partisan triggers. This could be as simple as stepping away from media for a few days, or limiting yourself to 30 minutes of scrolling each day, for example.

It may also benefit you to **walk away** or excuse yourself from political conversations for a short bit of time, if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, angry, sensitive, or not yet ready to talk about the Presidential Election. Avoid debating-instead, test out a healthy way to express how you're feeling.

Further, it would benefit our family members (our Mercy Family and our families at home) if we also took into consideration those around us, when we do choose to engage in conversations related to politics. In the upcoming days, let's be mindful about the various feelings potentially being felt all around us. Let's be empathetic toward each other.

An online Wellness Check will be sent to all students, on the morning following confirmed results of the 2020 Presidential Election. Following morning prayer that day, students will be given time in 1st hour to complete the online form. Best-fit Staff will follow up with student needs expressed in the Wellness Check.

MINDFULNESS

This is the best time to begin experimenting with mindfulness practices. You could set an intention to be fully **present** for the next week—not ignoring feelings or walking through your day on autopilot. You could give **yoga** a try (Some great YouTube channels are Journey Junkie, Alo Yoga, and Cat Meffan) or explore different ways to **meditate** (On the Headspace YouTube channel, you can find free, easy meditations for so many needs!)

GET INVOLVED

If you prefer to put your stress and worry into action, pour your passion into a cause. Couldn't vote because you're not 18 yet? Head over to [Vote.org/pledge-to-register](https://www.vote.org/pledge-to-register) to pledge your commitment to Voter Registration now. (They will even send you a text or email to remind you to register to vote when you turn 18!) Do you know what issues are important to you? Sign petitions in support of causes you connect with through organizations like [Change.org](https://www.change.org).

MORE RESOURCES

[*Healing When Your Candidate Lost](#)

[*Political Fatigue](#)

[*Election Anxiety](#)

[*Election Day Stress](#)



NEGATIVITY EMBEDS ITSELF
MORE EASILY THAN POSITIVITY.

YOU ARE NOT BROKEN IF
OPTIMISM IS HARD FOR YOU.

KEEP PRACTICING YOUR POSITIVITY.

I PROMISE IT'S WORTH IT.

@POSITIVELYPRESENT