

Mercy High School
Counseling Department

GOOD NEWS

December 2020



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

December 2020

GOOD NEWS

DECEMBER 2020



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Dani DiPirro @positivelypresent

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A new monthly feature for those looking to do better and be better.

Pear Miss Rona

A little Covid19 rant and a lot of ideas to help continue this coronafull life.

2nd Semester Schedules

Thinking of submitting a Schedule Change Request Form? Here is everything you'll need to know ahead of time!

College Corner

Some borrowed, expert advice and The Gift of Reflection, by Mrs. Holly Bennetts.

P2P Page

Mercy's chapter of Peer 2 Peer is lead by 5 fantastic students. This month's P2P mental health memo was created by Peer 2 Peer Student Leader, Izzy Zablock.



Important Dates IN DECEMBER

Club Meetings

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2ND, 1:15 VIA ZOOM

9th Grade Social Event-Kick Back and Kahoot

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3RD, 6-8 VIA ZOOM

9th Grade Monthly Meet Up

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7TH, 2:00 VIA ZOOM

Christmas Break

DECEMBER 19TH-JANUARY 5TH

Action Items for Allies & Advocates

If you are someone who is striving to make the world a less terrifying and frustrating place for people of color, here are a few ideas to get you started. Check back each month for more!

1. Just because you cannot see racism around you, does not mean that it is not happening. Trust people of color in their assessment of a situation.
2. Do not assume that all people of color share the same views or opinions.
3. Do not assume or try to guess someone's race.
4. Regard a person of color as an autonomous, unique individual, NOT as a representative of their race.

Dear Miss Rona, You are NOT invited to Christmas Break.

10 Covid19 Safe Ways to Spend Your Time Off This Year

Dear Miss Rona,

You gotta go. Seriously. It's the masking and distancing for me. It's the separation of family and friends for me. It's the rising numbers, the exponentially increased screen time, and uncertainty of what to come, for me.

With a beautiful 2 week break coming up, I know I will be tempted to do some of the things that are not yet deemed safe-but I won't. I know there is a chance I will start to feel limited, stir crazy, stuck indoors, and disconnected-so I have a plan! Please consider yourself officially uninvited to my Christmas Break. These next 2 pages list some of the ways I plan to keep myself entertained and keep myself and others safe from Covid19 over the holidays.

BYE.

Mrs. Brown

1.Feed the soul with music

Many artists (John Legend, Coldplay, Pink, Keith Urban, and Death Cab for Cutie-to name a few) have taken to live streaming concerts and performances via Instagram and YouTube.

The Grammy Museum and Metropolitan Opera have also been streaming live and pre-recording performances.

2.Host a Netflix Party

There is a free Chrome extension called "Netflix Party", which syncs the playback for all virtual party guests. There is also a chat feature, allowing attendees to share commentary and spoilers throughout the flick.

3.Get your artistic culture on

The Google Arts and Culture app allows one to explore, view, and read about classic and modern art. There are also many museums around the world offering virtual gallery tours.

4.Expand your global knowledge

AtlasObscura.com is self described as "The definitive guide to the world's hidden wonders". This is an internet gem geared toward discovering the fantastic features of various countries. They also offer online classes and travel experiences.

5.Play all the games

There are so many I want to play!
I plan on jumping into some
Among Us, The Jackbox
Collection, Splitlings, Fall Guys,
and Blek.

6.Scroll a little

**A few sites I love to dig into are
TheFluffingtonPost.com,
BordomTherapy.com,
Twloha.com, and
OverheardinNewYork.com.**

7.Make some Zoom dates

**To stay connected with pals and
also stay safe and healthy, set up
some times when you can all hop
on Zoom and catch up, or play a
remote game of Psych! or
Cards Against Humanity.**

8. Ugh..the Drive

**Is your Google Drive a hot mess of
random docs like mine? I really
want to throw some music on and
just dedicate an hour or two to
organizing them all into folders
or into the trash during break.**

9. Learn Something New

**There is a YouTube channel called
just that: Learn Something New
with the most popular and
entertaining explainers, how-tos
and life hacks. Check it out.**

10. Find a Pen-Pal

**Through sites like Pen Pal World and
International Geek Girl Pen Pals Club,
you can connect with peers in
different countries all over the world
via hand written letters or email.**

"How do I change my 2nd semester schedule?"

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES AND RESTRICTIONS, UNIQUE TO THIS SCHOOL YEAR'S 2ND SEMESTER SCHEDULE CHANGE REQUEST PROCESS:

***Counselors will accept the 2021 Spring Semester Schedule Change Request Form from December 1st through December 10th. (This form can be found in all Counseling Schoology courses.) Once completed, please submit this form to your assigned Counselor via email.**

***The Schedule Change Committee will meet in December to review your request and explore schedule change options for appropriate requests. You will then receive an email from your assigned Counselor: with a decision and explanation; with a request for more information; or with other options to explore.**

***Schedule change requests will not be granted for the following:**

- Requests to have a specific teacher**
- Requests to change assigned cohorts**
- "Change of mind" requests involving more change than a course drop and course add. (For example: A request to drop 7th hour Acting I and replace with 7th hour Swim/Gym may be granted. A request to drop 7th hour Acting I and replace with 2nd hour Swim/Gym would not be granted.)**
- Requests to be added to full courses (max number of students already enrolled)**
- Requests to be added to a course that would result in cohort imbalance**

If you are unsure if your request is appropriate, feel free to reach out to your Counselor to discuss, prior to submitting the form!



COLLEGE CORNER

Expert ADVICE

The following piece was written by Rick Clark, Director of Admission at Georgia Tech University.

Here are a few of the real gems I've heard, read, and seen lately in a consolidated (and relatively concise) format:

SEEN: One of my best friends just moved back to Atlanta. It's been such a gift, especially during Covid-19, to get consistent time together. One thing I appreciate about him, and something I've seen up close lately, is how quickly he will reach out to his friends and network when he needs a recommendation for an electrician or a place to buy good produce. While those are mundane examples, this also translates to his work as well, and it is illustrative of his overall humility and desire to improve.

As you go through your college admission experience, I hope you

will emulate this by continually asking:

“Who do I know that can help me?”

"Who knows more than me about x or y?"

"Who can provide you honest feedback and help you edit (not re-write) your essay?"

"Who has been through interviews or interviews people regularly?"

"Who has experience in financial planning or explaining debt, loans, long term implications of return on investment?"

Bottom line: USE YOUR NETWORK. If you are considering visiting, applying to, or ultimately attending a certain college and don't reach out to an alum of your high school, former teammate, or neighbor who is already there, you are missing a big opportunity. People want to help you. Friends, family, current college students, want to use their experience and knowledge to see you succeed, find your best match, and ultimately be confident in your college admission experience. It's on you to reach out.

DISCUSSED: Todd Rinehart is the VP-Enrollment at the University of Denver and the President of NACAC. On a panel recently, he beautifully outlined a truth that most high school students forget when they think about college admission. You control most of this experience.

Of the thousands of schools in this country, you decide which ones you want to apply to. In other words, if you apply to seven colleges, you eliminated 99% of possible places.

So, if you're about to hit submit on an app (or you have recently), you should celebrate that decision. I hope you will literally say out loud when you hit submit, "Of all the colleges and universities in the nation, I'm choosing to apply to you." Does that sound corny or cheesy (and more importantly why these midwestern foods associated with that concept)? Trust me. If your mentality when you apply is one of excitement about each college you apply to, then you are preparing yourself well for the rest of this experience.

Now, you do not control whether or not you are admitted, or the level of financial aid you receive. That part is out of your hands. Don't sit around worrying about it. Don't drive yourself nuts constantly hitting refresh on portals or emailing admission counselors asking them if decisions may be out earlier. Wait well.

You choose from your options. Ball is back in your court. If you listened to your counselor, did your research, and were honest with yourself about the set of schools you applied to, you are going to have choices.

People who have never been through the college admission experience often think the goal of this is to get into a certain place. Admission professionals, whether they are on the high school or university side, know the real truth– your goal is to have choice and options.

In the spring of your senior year, you will be able to sit down with the schools who have admitted you, look over your financial aid packages, revisit your goals, hopes, and dreams, listen to your parents insight, advice, and encouragement, and make a choice. That is what this is all about, friends. Don't let some hack tell you otherwise. At this point, you own and control 66% of this exchange. But I think this pandemic has taught us there is a fourth piece– also one you control. You decide how you show up at the place you ultimately pick. Bam– 75%! (With grade inflation in some schools that is an A.)

This fall has stretched and challenged us all, but I've been deeply encouraged by the resilience and spirit of the students I work with on a weekly basis on campus. They regularly say, "You know. It's not perfect, but I am so glad I'm here." Or "I love being with my friends and we are finding ways to have fun and enjoy our semester." Even when the pandemic ends, you are going to find situations or elements of your college that are not perfect. Your job is to arrive ready to

embrace the new community you choose, build a new network, and take advantage of opportunities. That mentality and approach is all up to you.

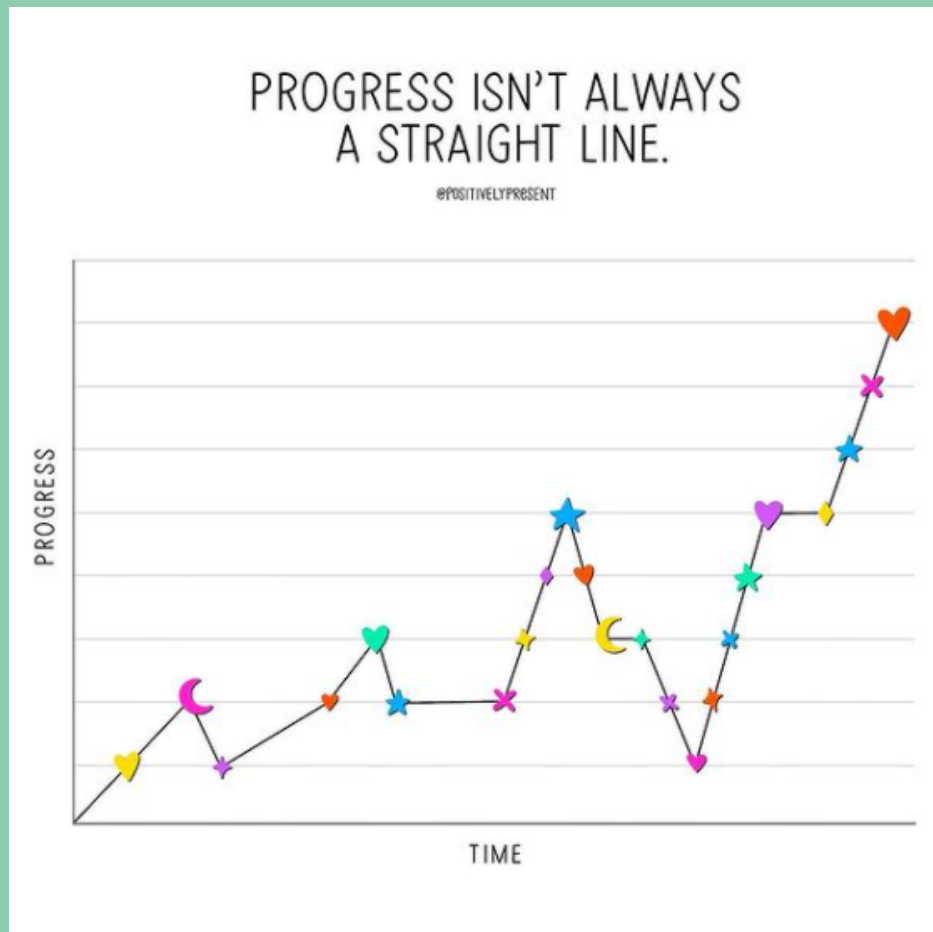
READ: My friend and co-author Brennan Barnard wrote a great piece in Forbes recently. Per usual he tackles some of the most pressing and relevant conversations happening in college admission with balance, empathy, and (see #1) by leaning on the wisdom of experts. His piece covers the truth about: test score optional; high school quotas; the “magic formula” of getting in; gap year impact on the Class of 2021; how COVID-19 is impacting the college admission world.

BONUS– On a hike this week, my son asked, “Dad. You know how there is a yellow sun and an orange sun, and also a blue moon?” Yeah... “Well, is there a blue sun?” Hmm... I’m not sure. Let’s look that up (turns out the answer is ... kind of).

I get these kinds of questions from my kids constantly. Con-stant-ly. About former first ladies, minor powers of super-heroes, whether penguins are mammals, and the list goes on. But it’s great and I do my best when I don’t know the answer to look things up with them.

I’m imploring you not to lose that child-like curiosity and willingness to ask questions in your college admission experience. All of the

points, Brennan makes in his article, you can ask individual colleges. What is on your mind? What do you want to know or ask? Do it. That's why colleges employ admission counselors—to be available to you and help you get answers to your important, specific, and critical questions. Ask **YOUR** questions. Whether that is about majors or residence halls or admission policies or origins of mascots or vegan options in the dining hall. Part of being a good college student is being curious, being proactive, and constantly asking questions. Start now!



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The Gift of Reflection

Reflection is a key practice in the high school journey and eventually in the college search adventure. Too often however, this step is bypassed to rush to future planning, whether it be planning for the next semester, next year or researching colleges. Reflection is key to setting goals for the future. As the days get shorter and the weather turns colder, drawing inward is more natural. As the first semester comes to a close, spend some time with your Mercy student reflecting on the semester. Share your own thoughts about your journey this semester as well.

What has been your favorite class or activity this semester?
Why?

What is one thing you are proud of this semester?

What was your biggest failure?

What did you learn?

How are you different today than you were in August?

What are your goals for next semester?

How can I help you achieve them?

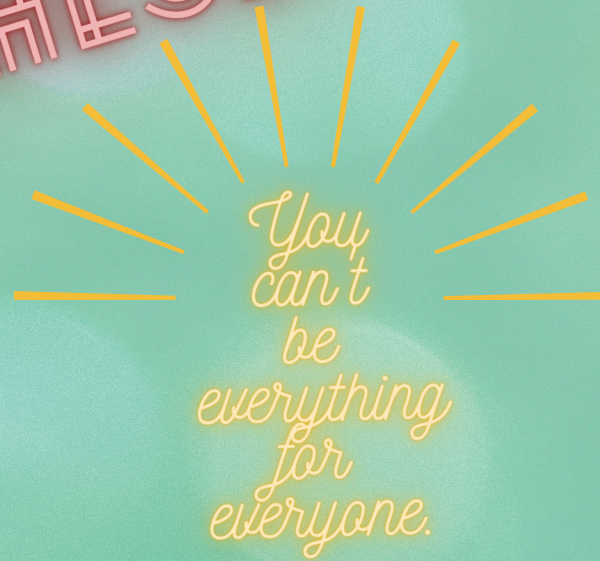
Start a journal with your Marlin! Writing is a great way to reflect and to learn about each other. There is a great book, 300 Writing Prompts, that can help you create a journal. Grab a composition notebook, write the prompt on the top, and answer the question, give the book to your Marlin and have them write the same response, share this back and forth, sometimes you might want to talk about the reflection, and that is ok! Some of my favorite from the book, “Complete the thought: “Today I hope...”, “What traffic sign best represents your life right now”, “Which is stronger, love or hate?”, “What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?” So how does all of this relate to the college process? The more we know ourselves, as students and parents, the easier it is to navigate the college adventure. The more we teach and model reflection the more we grow. Self-advocacy, time-management and goal-setting becomes easier when we have a better understanding of who we are.

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Holly Bennetts



PSST!
READ THESE!

Chances are,
you or someone you love
may need one
of these messages. *or more!*



—❖—
A bad day

(OR A SERIES OF BAD DAYS)
is not equal to a bad life.

.....
the only way out is through

SOMETIMES, THE KEY TO OVERCOMING OUR CHALLENGES IS SIMPLY TO SURVIVE; TO LIVE THROUGH THEM, TRUST THAT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE TEMPORARY, AND TRY OUR BEST EVERY DAY.



FEELINGS
are not facts

not
all
thoughts
are
true.

ALL FEELINGS
are real & allowed

M E R C Y

Peer 2 Peer

A partnership with University of Michigan Depression Center



New to Mercy this year, Peer 2 Peer is a student lead club, guided by the University of Michigan Depression Center and coordinated by Mrs. Brown. Peer 2 Peer aims to increase mental health awareness and education throughout our school community by providing reliable mental health information and resources, by means of a student created, mental health campaign.

This year's P2P Leadership Team includes Aubrey Etue, Anna Rimatzski, Sam Szelag, Julianna Tauge, and Izzy Zablock. Each month, The Good News will proudly include a piece written by a P2P Leader. This month's P2P Page was provided by Izzy Zablock.



The Mercy P2P 2021 Campaign is called "Find Your Fire"

the p2p page

A MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH MEMO
BY MERCY PEER 2 PEER LEADERSHIP

We have all heard the metaphors surrounding the troubles of this year. The curse of 2020, the global sob story, the endless journey filled with struggles. We watched the world close school by school, store by store, forcing us to adapt to a completely unfamiliar environment. Our daily chats in the cafeteria became FaceTime and Zoom calls while our days were soon filled with at-home workout videos, keeping up with TikTok trends, and spending maybe too much time with our families. It has felt like a long cycle of drastic change that everyone is ready to be over with.

However, we also witnessed an emergence of progress. Young people across the world came together and used their voices to amplify a powerful message, and we saw a record-breaking turnout in voting polls through encouragement in our nation. Most importantly, we realized how humans are easily connected by little things in life. The luxuries of giving quick hugs to our loved ones, traveling for the holidays, and watching our favorite college football teams compete, all connected us in more ways than we realized.

Regardless of how 2020 turned out, we must continue to emphasize and prioritize mental health. You may be a student, teacher, or parent trying to find a healthy work-life balance as a new year approaches, and there are simple steps to take in improving our mental health journey. Below, I list and describe three of my favorite ways to navigate through these chaotic times.

Throughout much of lockdown, I struggled abundantly with adjusting to the ever-changing world around me. It quickly became difficult for me to understand that seeing family on the weekends, going to school with my friends, or even going to Target for fun was simply out of the question for the time being. As I began to cope with this, I did a thorough amount of research on the complexities of mental health and discovered one specific thing about it that I did not realize before, which is mental health is very similar to physical health, in more ways than one.

Oftentimes, when we feel uncomfortable physical pain in any area of the body, we take care of it in one way or another. We do not dismiss the pain because it is bothering us and preventing us from being the best version of ourselves. However, when it comes to mental health, at times, this is not the case. When our thoughts begin to feel overbearingly pessimistic, many people believe that dismissing these negative thoughts will erase them from their mind. We may not treat these thoughts immediately, but rather, we ignore them regardless of how uncomfortable they may be. Ultimately, ignoring these feelings prevents us from being our best selves. It can cause an undeniable build-up of uneasy feelings in our minds and can lead to detrimental damage to our mental health.

In concluding my research, I realized that while suppressing these feelings may be our natural instinct, it is imperative that we treat our mental health the same as physical health. Although what I was struggling with may not have been clinical, I still found it important to explore the resources I had at my fingertips, which helped me understand what I was feeling and how to resolve it, short term and long term. We must prioritize both physical and mental health, address any and all pain that we may be feeling, and treat it

immediately and effectively, in order for us to present the best versions of ourselves to the world. Whether that means personally or professionally , it is key that we acknowledge the physical pain and the mental pain we may be feeling by highly classifying both forms of our health in every way possible.

According to a study completed by Mark Murphy, a senior contributor to "Forbes", "those who vividly describe their goals in written form [become] strongly associated with goal success..." (Murphy 1). Although my mother was not aware of Murphy's work on goal-setting, she gave me a very similar piece of advice about setting goals through making lists. I have carried this tactic with me especially throughout high school, because for as long as I can remember, my time management skills have not been pristine. This strategy completely changed the course of my sophomore year when I began to apply this advice consistently and made weekly lists of my academic, extracurricular, and social schedules and goals. It helped me to remember these events more accurately, improving my organization skills, which ultimately elevated my performance in all aspects.

Once I found it effective to write down weekly goals, I decided to take my new list-making skills in another direction. At the end of each week, I made it an objective of mine to write down a minimum of three positive moments from each week and reflect on how those optimistically impacted me. Through doing this, I found that identifying the positive experiences of my week allowed me to have a better mindset and soon enough, helped me to recognize the satisfaction in my daily life. Although it may not have been easy, it had quickly become a repeating pattern in my week to outline the happy

moments when it felt like there were none, and helped me to check in on my mental health more frequently.

As we approach our daily struggles, it is easy to allow our thoughts to consume us. As mentioned, I have found it useful to write down valuable feelings and memories to better visualize and embrace happiness. Winter break is the perfect opportunity to thoroughly reflect on the successes of this year, no matter what the rest of the year entailed. Dedicate some time to write down five to ten optimistic moments you want to remember from this year. Pinpointing these impactful experiences will help you recognize what may have been overlooked among other events, stimulating a relaxing environment and benefiting mental health. Recognizing these moments will not only stimulate a better outlook, but enable you to check in on yourself and ensure that you are balancing the negative with positive, and emphasizing the good.

One of the most efficient things I did over lockdown was not only creating lists for my evolving schedules, but also, establish an at-home routine. Human nature requires people to maintain healthy social interaction and relationships in order to maintain a stable physical and mental state. Before the pandemic, many of us had a variety of routines based on our schedules and commitments. With schedules being on pause, many people have experienced stress and decreased motivation. This anxiety can be combated with self-help techniques, such as waking up at a reasonable time every day, maintaining an at-home exercise routine, or putting together an outfit that boosts your confidence, even if you are not leaving the house. Implementing such tactics, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America

(ADAA) helps teenagers and adults, to “keep [themselves] active and less likely to spiral, [making it easier] to readjust to the outside world when it’s time to get back to work” (Gupta 1). Maintaining structure within our homes over the break will enable motivation, stability, and a healthy environment for yourself and those around you. The contributions these tactics have proved to display are a more effective way to keep an expanding process on the path of mental health during these jarring times and continue positivity.

As previously discussed, increased feelings of anxiety can quickly take over our mental state, making it harder for a person to verbally express how they are feeling, causing panic and sadness. To combat these emotions and encourage rational decision-making, I encourage you to talk. Yes, you read that right, I encourage you to talk over winter break. Whether in small or deep conversations, it is important for us to verbally express ourselves as a way to release built up tension. However, in order to do so properly, it is imperative that you find a person you can consistently confide in. This person should be trustworthy and understanding, but most of all, comfortable. Researchers at UCLA suggest that “putting your feelings into words - a process called ‘affect labeling’ - can diminish the response of the [brain]...overtime, you can become less stressed over something that bothers you” (Ravenscraft 1). Allowing yourself to come out of your comfort zone and express your feelings can be one of the best decisions in decreasing anxiety.

To close, I want to remind you to simply relax. This break is much needed for students, teachers, parents, or pretty much everyone. The holiday season is typically spent with family and friends, and although this year may look a little different, take this time to check in on those around you, including yourself. Whether you choose to make a list of the encouraging moments from this year, establish a concrete at-home routine to take into the new year, or express your feelings, prioritize your mental health. Like

I said, this year has not been easy on anyone, but we have to remember that we cannot love those around us this holiday season if we do not love ourselves first. Place your mental health at the top of your list this winter break, and every day, because you deserve it.


*Wishing you a Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year.*

Isabelle Zablock, on behalf of Mercy Peer 2 Peer



Citations

- Gupta, A., Judith, Gupta, A., Slinki, David, Brie, H.,... Abigail. (n.d.) COVID-19 Lockdown Guide: How to Manage Anxiety and Isolation During Quarantine. Retrieved November 26, 2020.
- Murphy, M. (2018, April 15). Neuroscience Explains Why You Need To Write Down Your Goals If You Actually Want To Achieve Them. Retrieved November 26, 2020.
- Ravenscraft, E. (2020, April 03). Why Talking About Our Problems Helps So Much (and How to Do It). Retrieved November 26, 2020.

A hand is holding a white, heart-shaped card against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The card has a slightly distressed or handmade appearance. The text on the card is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, arranged in four lines. The hand holding the card is visible at the bottom left, with the thumb and index finger gripping the edges of the heart.

**PLEASE BE KIND TO
YOURSELF. 2020
HAS BEEN A LOT
TO PROCESS.**