

Mercy High School
Counseling Department

GOOD NEWS

October 2019



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

October 2019

Mercy High School Counseling Department

Good News

OCTOBER 2019

THINGS I HOPE

autumn

WILL BRING...

@POSITIVELYPRESENT

LOTS OF
LAUGHTER

INSPIRED MOTIVATION

MORE
MAGIC

EYE-
OPENING
WISDOM

STRENGTH

LOVE

PEACE

important dates

All of October: College Month

September 30-October 6: Spirit Week

October 3: All School Assembly,
9th Grade Spooky Scavenger Hunt, 3:15-4:30
start in Mercy Media Center

October 4: Field Day

October 6: Homecoming

October 10: Parent/Teacher Conferences

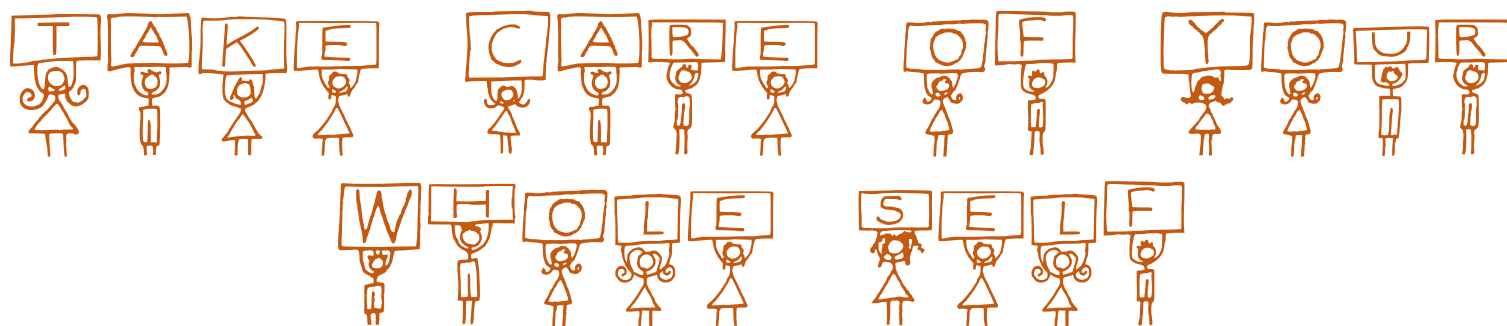
October 11: No School

October 16: 9th Grade Retreat Day
10th & 11th grade PSAT

October 24: Sophomore Class Trip

October 27: Open House

October 28: No School (Staff-In Service)



I grew up hearing messages of self-care for my body such as: “eat your vegetables”, “drink water”, “exercise”, “go to the doctor when you get sick”, etc. Very rarely though, was I encouraged to, or taught how to take care of myself *emotionally*. How about you?

One of my favorite TED Talks is by a Psychologist named Guy Winch. In this talk, he explains this issue perfectly. He describes witnessing a very young child falling, cutting his knee, then immediately going to find himself a band-aid and bandaging up his “boo-boo”. What struck him here was that this tiny human could not even brush his own teeth yet, although he was at some point taught how to tend to his own physical first aid.

He goes on to say:

“We sustain psychological injuries even more often than we do physical ones, injuries like failure or rejection or loneliness. And they can also get worse if we ignore them, and they can impact our lives in dramatic ways. And yet, even though there are scientifically proven techniques we could use to treat these kinds of psychological injuries, we don't. It doesn't even occur to us that we should. “Oh, you're feeling depressed? Just shake it off; it's all in your head.” Can you imagine saying that to somebody with a broken leg: “Oh, just walk it off; it's all in your leg.””

Although identification of and treatment for mental illness is on the rise, one does not have to have a diagnosable disorder for mental health aid to be important. Much like how we can be proactive in our physical health, we can approach our emotional needs similarly. For example,

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there is much research to support that holding feelings in, deprioritizing stress relief, and too much social media can lead to mental health issues. Thus, the acts of expressing our feelings, scheduling moments for stress relief in our day, and limiting our use of social media, are all seeds we can plant, to bloom a healthier mental state.

I also consider mental exercise just as important as physical exercise. The brain, like any other muscle, gets stronger as you challenge its strength and abilities. Take feelings of anxiety as an example. The part of the brain that sends messages of fear and worry is the amygdala. This part of the brain is responsible for our Fight or Flight responses. Sometimes our amygdala gets it wrong and it tells us that an uncomfortable situation is an unsafe situation (such as having a difficult conversation or going to our least favorite class). The more we run from these situations that bring us anxiety, the more we affirm our amygdala. When we face these anxious situations, cope with the worry that comes up, and survive said discomfort, we strengthen the amygdala and fine tune how this part of our brain interprets life's challenges. We unfortunately cannot believe everything that we think. Look at it like exercise for your brain to practice questioning your thoughts and sitting with your feelings, similarly to crunches for strong abs!

One of the most important pieces to emotional hygiene is recognizing our unhealthy psychological behaviors or patterns, and changing them. Here is a totally accurate example from Winch's TED talk I referenced earlier:

“Our minds and our feelings -- they're not the trustworthy friends we thought they were. They're more like a really moody friend, who can be totally supportive one minute, and really unpleasant the next. I once worked with this woman who, after 20 years marriage and an extremely ugly divorce, was finally ready for her first date. She had met this guy online, and he seemed nice and he seemed successful, and most importantly, he seemed really into her. So she was very excited, she bought a new dress, and they met at an upscale New York City bar for a

Continued on next page

drink. Ten minutes into the date, the man stands up and says, "I'm not interested," and walks out. Rejection is extremely painful. The woman was so hurt she couldn't move. All she could do was call a friend. Here's what the friend said: "Well, what do you expect? You have big hips, you have nothing interesting to say. Why would a handsome, successful man like that ever go out with a loser like you?"

Shocking, right, that a friend could be so cruel? But it would be much less shocking if I told you it wasn't the friend who said that. It's what the woman said to herself. And that's something we all do, especially after a rejection. We all start thinking of all our faults and all our shortcomings, what we wish we were, what we wish we weren't. We call ourselves names. Maybe not as harshly, but we all do it. And it's interesting that we do, because our self-esteem is already hurting. Why would we want to go and damage it even further? We wouldn't make a physical injury worse on purpose. You wouldn't get a cut on your arm and decide, "Oh! I know -- I'm going to take a knife and see how much deeper I can make it."

When our self-esteem is low, we are so much more susceptible to anxiety, stress, and low mood. The last thing we should be doing when faced with adversity, is psychologically beating ourselves down further, rather, we should be giving self-love, reaching out to others for support, and participating in activities that make us feel good, not bad.

I realize this is all easier said than done. I also realize that if you've gone your entire life without mental health first aid, you may need to break some unhealthy habits before you can make some healthier new ones. I write this piece with hope that *you* will realize how important your mental health is to your overall well-being. Do something kind for your mind today!

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Trish Brown



... IF YOU ARE MESSY AND COMPLEX.
... IF YOU REFUSE TO BE INAUTHENTIC.
... IF YOU KEEP YOUR IDEAS TO YOURSELF.
... IF YOU FEEL FEARFUL OF THE FUTURE.
... IF YOU DO NOTHING SOME DAYS.
... IF YOU WISH IT WERE DIFFERENT.
... IF YOU CHANGE HOW YOU FEEL.
... IF YOU DON'T FIT IN WITH "NORMAL."
... IF YOU SOLVE PROBLEMS YOUR WAY.
... IF YOU AREN'T YET READY TO CHANGE.
... IF YOU STRUGGLE TO ACCEPT HELP.
... IF YOU CRITICIZE YOURSELF TOO MUCH.
... IF YOU DEMAND WHAT YOU DESERVE.

COLLEGE CORNER

JUNIOR YEAR

(A TIMELINE)

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.

We will speak more about the process in our

Junior Parent Kick-Off Meeting,

November 7th from 7:00-8:30 pm in the Media Center.

In the meantime, check out the following list:

- 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. Your counselor can help pick the best test for you based on your PreACT that was taken in the spring of the sophomore year and the PSAT that is being taken this month. Colleges that require tests will accept either.
- 2. College Planning meeting.** Each Mercy junior family will have an opportunity to meet with their counselor before the middle of March. This meeting will help plan an application process for your daughter.
- 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 schools - focus on traits and characteristics, which will help provide a roadmap for list building.

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4. **Go to a College Fair.** Many college fairs take place in October. Visit the [College Day/Night calendar](#) and plan on attending one (or more) that fits into your schedule. Set a goal of visiting at least one school from each category (large, mid-sized, small) and jot down notes. If you have an idea of what you want to study, ask about that. If you don't know, ask how the college helps you discern what you might want to study. If you like certain clubs, organizations or events, ask about those. Frame these questions with what you have (or have not) enjoyed while in high school.
5. **Create an application to-do list.** In the late spring, we will meet with the Class of 2021 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 publicized 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 a frenzy around the college application process. The frenzy creates a feeling of urgency and missing out and can have the process driven by fear. You are not behind, and you will not miss anything. Applications aren't even widely available until August 1st. Spend time reflecting on the high school experience, goals for the future and dreaming about what is next. This reflection sets an excellent stage for the process.

As always, please feel free to reach out to your Mercy Counselor with any questions. College representatives are also more than happy to speak with students, so help your daughter draft email communications to the admissions office. When you start to feel overwhelmed with what might be ahead, step back, take a deep breath and enjoy the moment you are in with your daughter.

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Holly Bennetts

TOP TIPS FOR FINANCIAL AID

October 1st is here which means the [FAFSA](#) and [CSS Profile](#) are now available for the class of 2020 to complete. We encourage every family to complete the FAFSA, even if you do not feel you will qualify for any need-based (gift) aid. Here are some top things to consider:

- 1. Use the data retrieval tool on the FAFSA if you are able to.** The FAFSA will actually let you know if you can use it or not. This links your prior-year tax return to the FAFSA and saves you filling out extra information.
- 2. Check the CSS Profile website to see if your schools accept/require the CSS profile.** Only complete it if your school is listed.
- 3. Call a financial aid office for help.** Most college financial aid offices will answer questions regarding the FAFSA. Reach out to them. They are there to help you through the application process and understanding your aid package when it becomes available.
- 4. Reach out to the Financial Aid office if your circumstances change.** Financial Aid is based on your prior-year taxes (the return you filed in January). There are times the prior year is not an accurate representation of your finances. Reach out to the Financial Aid office, they have a Special Circumstances process to make sure your aid is based on a realistic financial picture. Special circumstances can include winning the lottery, employer buy-out, borrowing from a 401K, medical expenses, caring for an elderly relative, unplanned retirement and everything in between.
- 5. Compare your Aid Packages.** Typically, colleges will send you a full financial aid package 6-8 weeks after you are accepted. The College Board has a [comparison](#) tool that allows you to compare financial aid packages from various colleges.
- 6. Reach out to ask for more money.** Not all schools will have the ability to negotiate financial aid, but some will. Don't hesitate to reach out to a school to see if additional money is available. This is easier to do if you have filed a FAFSA.
- 7. Verification is random.** The federal government randomly selects approximately 30% of FAFSA filers for verification. You have not done anything wrong in the process, this is just a way to have a checks and balances system in place. If you are selected for verification, your financial aid office will reach out to you to ask more questions.

The Financial Aid office is part of the Student Services division at the university. They are there to help you as you navigate the process. Reach out to them if you have questions or concerns.

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Holly Bennetts

SENIOR COLLEGE CHECK IN MEETINGS

Mercy's Counseling Department recently finished meeting individually with all seniors, as a follow up to the College Application Meeting on August 23. The individual senior check-in meetings were a good way for seniors to touch base with their counselor about where they are in the college application process. Seniors came in with some great questions about Common Application, Essays, Teacher letters of recommendation and Naviance. Counselors were pleased to see that every student has started the application process in some way. Please know that we are here to continue to help in this process. Wonderful job seniors! Keep up the good work!!

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Arpna Hessler

COLLEGE MONTH

Here is what we have planned at Mercy:

What's App? Sessions

During 4th & 5th hours, Counselors will post up in the cafeteria, ready to assist with college applications, help edit college essays, and answer any college related questions. Additionally, each student who stops by our table will receive a treat.

Tuesday, October 1st (D4)

Wednesday, October 9th (D2)

Thursday, October 17th (D6)

Tuesday, October 22nd (D3)

Thursday, October 24th (D5)

Tuesday, October 29th (D1)

Tuesday College Trivia

Every Tuesday this month, an email will be sent out prior to 1st hour, with a college related trivia question. Answers can be submitted in the Counseling Office. At the end of the day, a few correct answers will be drawn and those students will get to choose a prize from the College Swag Bag!

Staff College Stories

All month, Mercy Staff Members will be asked to represent their alma mater in various ways. Feel free to ask us questions about our college experiences!

Maximize your financial aid and don't make these... COMMON MISTAKES

Not Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

All State of Michigan financial aid programs require a student to file the FAFSA. By not completing the FAFSA, you are missing the opportunity to qualify for what could be thousands of dollars to help you pay for college. The FAFSA determines if you are eligible for need-based financial aid and is the application used for Federal Direct Loans.

Not Using the Correct Web Site

The official FAFSA Web site is fafsa.gov. You never have to pay to complete the FAFSA.

Not Getting a FSA ID Ahead of Time

To log in and sign the FAFSA online, you must use a FSA ID. Register for a FSA ID at fsaid.ed.gov.

Waiting to File the FAFSA

It is important to file the FAFSA early. You may complete the FAFSA as early as October 1. Students are required to report income information from an earlier tax year. For example, on the 2020-21 FAFSA, students (and parents, as appropriate) will report their 2018 income information.

Missing FAFSA Deadlines

The State of Michigan deadline for the Michigan Competitive Scholarship (MCS) and Michigan Tuition Grant (MTG) is March 1.

Not Reading FAFSA Directions Carefully

Too many students see delays in their financial aid for simple mistakes that could have been easily avoided.

- **College Grade Level**

Question 29 asks that you select your grade level in college from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. If you are currently a senior in high school or will be a first-time college student, select "1st year, never attended college."

- **Certificate/Degree**

Question 30 asks that you select the degree or certificate that you will be working toward during the 2020-21 school year. If you are currently a high school senior, do not select "graduate/professional degree."

- **Confusing Parent and Student Information**

Remember that the FAFSA is the student's application. When the FAFSA refers to "you" or "your," it's referring to the student.

- **Entering the Wrong Name**

You must enter your full name as it appears on official government documents (no nicknames). Your full name should also be reported the same way on your SAT.

- **Entering the Wrong Social Security Number (SSN)**

To avoid delays in processing your FAFSA, make sure that you have entered the correct SSN.

- **Amount of Income Tax**

Income tax is not the same as income, taxes withheld, or taxes due. It is the amount of tax that you (and if married, your spouse) paid on your income earned from work.

- **Entering the Wrong Address**

Make sure you enter your permanent address, not your temporary or summer address. To be considered for State of Michigan financial aid, you must be a resident of Michigan (which needs to be reported on your FAFSA). Questions 18 and 19 (for the student) and 69 and 70 (for the parent, if applicable) asks you to report residency information. Do not leave these answers blank.

- **Citizenship Status**

Students must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen to receive Federal and State financial aid. Question 14 asks you to report your citizenship status. Do not leave this answer blank.



Not Reading FAFSA Directions Carefully (Continued)

- **High School Completion Status**

Question 26 asks you to report your high school completion status when you begin college in the 2020-21 school year. If you earned a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, do not select "None of the above."

- **Not Reporting Parent Information**

Even if you fully support yourself, pay your own bills, and file your own taxes, you may still be considered a dependent student for Federal student aid purposes; therefore, you'll need to provide parent information on your FAFSA. Parent information will need to be provided if you do not meet the criteria for independent status. To see if you qualify for independent status, visit www.studentaid.ed.gov (Dependency Status).

- **Listing Only One College**

You can add ANY college you are considering to your FAFSA, even if you aren't sure whether you'll apply or be accepted. It doesn't hurt your application to add more colleges. **Don't forget to add the Michigan college you plan to attend as your FIRST school code listed on the FAFSA.** If you qualify for State aid, only the college you list first on your FAFSA will be notified of your eligibility for an award. Log into your MISSG Student Portal account at www.michigan.gov/missg or contact MI Student Aid at 1-888-447-2687 when your college choice changes.

- **Not Signing the FAFSA**

Many students fail to actually sign the FAFSA with their FSA ID and submit it.

Not Completing the TIP Application Before the Deadline

For TIP eligible students, the TIP application must be completed by August 31 of each student's high school completion year. Otherwise, all TIP benefits are forfeited permanently.

Not Logging into MISSG Student Portal

MI Student Aid offers an online Student Portal where students can log in and update their contact information, change their college choice, and view their State aid eligibility and payments. To access the MISSG Student Portal, visit www.michigan.gov/missg and click the "Student Portal" button. First-time users must know their SSN and have a FAFSA or TIP application on file to create an account. To begin, click the link on the sign-in page to create a username and password.

No SAT Score on Record

To be considered for MCS, MI Student Aid must have your SAT record linked with a SSN. To verify that your SSN is on file, please contact our Customer Care Center at 1-888-447-2687.

If MI Student Aid did not receive your score from SAT, you should complete the following steps:

1. Make sure you checked the box on your SAT allowing permission for your score to be released.
2. Contact...
 - a. your high school for permission to fax your SAT score to MI Student Aid at 517-241-5835, or;
 - b. your college for permission to fax your SAT score to MI Student Aid at 517-241-5835, or;
 - c. SAT at 1-866-756-7346 to send a copy of your scores to MI Student Aid, or;
 - d. log into the CollegeBoard at <https://collegeboard.org/mysat> to request your scores be sent to MI Student Aid (the State of Michigan code is 1173).

For questions or more information, please contact MI Student Aid.

Phone: 1-888-447-2687

Email: mistudentaid@michigan.gov

Fax: 517-241-5835

Web: www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid

Address: P.O. Box 30462, Lansing, MI 48909



@mistudentaid



Michigan Department of
TREASURY

In the past year alone,
vaping among
high schoolers has increased **78%**

CENTER FOR
TOBACCO
PRODUCTS



How much **do you know** about the **epidemic?**

E-cigarettes, also known as “vapes,” are becoming increasingly popular among teens.^{1,2}

In fact, they are the most commonly used tobacco product among both middle and high school students. You may have already seen or heard about students vaping in your school, but it is important to know that certain types of vapes can be used very discreetly.



SOME TEENS REPORT USING E-CIGARETTES IN SCHOOL BATHROOMS AND EVEN IN THE CLASSROOM.

Learning more about the different types of e-cigarette products is an important first step in addressing youth vaping.

DID YOU KNOW:

E-cigarettes come in a variety of shapes and sizes and may not look like a tobacco product, which can make them hard to spot.³

Some devices popular among teens—like JUUL and myblu—are as small as a USB flash drive and even look like one.

Certain products emit very low amounts of aerosol or “vapor,” which makes them easier to use discreetly than combustible cigarettes.

Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, the same highly addictive drug in cigarettes.^{4,5} Some e-cigarettes may contain as much nicotine as a pack of 20 regular cigarettes.³

A Big Problem... A SMALL DEVICE



Over
10.7
million
youth aged 12–17
are at-risk for using
e-cigarettes.^{6,7}

Many teens have dangerous misperceptions that lead them to believe that vaping is harmless.

Common myths believed about vaping, along with the facts.

"It's just flavoring."

Vapes get their flavors from chemicals. While these flavorings are safe to eat in food, they're not safe to inhale. Inhaling flavor chemicals can harm your lungs.¹¹

Want an example?

Some buttery-flavored vapes like caramel contain diacetyl and acetoin. Inhaling diacetyl has been linked to popcorn lung, a lung disease that doesn't have a cure.¹¹

"It's just water vapor."

But it's not.

Vaping can expose the user's lungs to harmful chemicals like formaldehyde, diacetyl and acrolein, as well as toxic metal particles like nickel, tin and lead.^{4,8-10,11-13}

"I don't have an addictive personality—I won't get hooked on vapes."

Vaping delivers nicotine to the brain in as little as 10 seconds.^{14,15}

A teen's brain is still developing, making it more vulnerable to nicotine addiction.¹⁶

Some vapes that claim they are nicotine-free are not.^{8,17-22}

"My vape says it's nicotine-free. There's no way I'll become addicted."

"Nicotine isn't that bad for me."

Nicotine exposure during the teen years can disrupt normal brain development. It can have long-lasting effects, like increased impulsivity and mood disorders.²³⁻²⁵

"Just because I vape doesn't mean I'm going to smoke cigarettes."

Research shows teens who vape are more likely to try smoking cigarettes.²⁶

FDA's Efforts to Curb Youth E-Cigarette Use

FDA is committed to protecting youth from the dangers of e-cigarettes. In addition to our national peer-to-peer public education campaign called "The Real Cost," we're joining forces with Scholastic to provide teachers and school administrators with the resources they need to educate their students about e-cigarettes.

Together, we've created a **free lesson plan and research activity** for teachers to educate their students on the health risks of e-cigarette use. Please visit the [Scholastic youth-vaping-risks site](https://www.scholastic.com/youth-vaping-risks) to access these resources.

Share This Information



Please share this infographic with other teachers and school administrators. In addition, if you'd like to learn more about e-cigarettes, check out these resources:

- » [Surgeon General Fact Sheet](#) – E-cigarette use among youth and young adults
- » [Parent Tip Sheet](#) – How parents can talk with their teen about vaping
- » [CDC Infographic](#) – E-cigarette ads and youth infographics
- » [Smokefree Teen](#) – If you know a teen who is addicted to any tobacco product, including cigarettes and e-cigarettes, there are resources to help them quit

When you     better,
you   better!

I am a true believer in the power of human beings as resources. When feeling stuck, or taking on something new, often the most valuable insight can come from others, with experience in what we are facing!

*I reached out to a few **Mercy Link Leaders**, and asked them to drop some knowledge bombs for us.*

What was the most challenging aspect of your first year at Mercy?

“The most challenging aspect was definitely making friends. I came into Mercy with zero friends and there was no familiar face for me to smile at in the hallways, ask for help, or sit with on off hours. I didn’t know anyone and I feared that it would be like that forever. I also was a very shy and timid person so I felt like making friends would be difficult, especially since I was not a fan of branching out or going outside of my comfort zone. Eventually, I realized that so many other people were in the same situation as me and this helped me to make some new friends!”-Mya Williams, 11th grade

“The most challenging aspect of my first year at Mercy was staying organized and studying. Many girls at Mercy really struggled with grades freshman year especially not letting them define [us]. I stayed organized by religiously using my planner (it helps more than you know! Use your agenda book or another planner type system!) As for grades, just knowing it does and will get better, as long as you keep working hard, and know you’re doing your personal best. It will get so much better!”-Dalia Housey, 11th grade

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Brown