

Mercy High School
Counseling Department

GOOD NEWS

February 2021



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

GOOD NEWS

February 2021



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HOW THE COUNSELING DEPARTMENT IS SPREADING THE MERCY LOVE

**Junior Family
College Interviews
continue through
February!**

**9th Graders will be
introduced to SCOIR
this month!**
(SCOIR is our
College search and
application tool)

**We will be providing
9th, 10th, & 11th
grade students with
Registration Orientation
at the end
of the month!**

**Preliminary
2021-2022 Mercy Link Leader
application info
will be available
at the end
of the month!**

**Keep an eye out
for new
Wednesday
Webinars!**

Dear High School Me...

I asked Mercy Staff:

If you could go back in time and offer your High School Self a piece of advice, what would it be?

Dear Lisa,

It is okay to take risks and be wrong. It is OKAY to make mistakes. Dream BIG and be open to all possibilities! Don't limit yourself. Looking back, I can see that I limited myself in what I thought I could do or what I was worthy of based on my family and my background. I know now that I can do all sorts of things - big and small. All I need is faith in myself, a little bit of dedication, and the love of some good people to help me out and support me when the going gets tough. Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or you think you can't...you're right."

-Mrs. Wilson



Dear Patty,

Don't sweat the small stuff. Cry it out and let it go. Exercise more. Enjoy the little things like a warm pet on your lap on a cold day. Don't waste time not liking how you look and mentally/verbally cutting yourself down. Every time you look at old pictures of your younger self you will see yourself as beautiful and young. Try to enjoy that in real-time.

-Mrs. Perry

Continued on next page

Dear Alisa,

Life is unpredictable, things don't always go as planned. Stop worrying about what others think of you, you're more than good enough. I know that being kind hearted can be difficult and sometimes hurtful, understand it's not in your nature to care less. Recognize it's truly a blessing to have a loving kind heart. Study harder, write more poetry, push yourself a little more socially! Come out of your shy protective shell from time to time to be assertive and be brave. You're courageous, humble and strong, amazing and beautiful! Remember to always let your light shine especially during the dark times. You are just who God made you to be-incredibly you!

-Mrs Kelly

Dear Colleen,

Your road in life is just beginning. Be open to new ideas, new people and new experiences and your path on this journey through life will unfold in unforeseeable ways.

-Ms. McMaster



Dear Trish,

Even though you do not feel it now, unconditional love is in your future. It gets better-I promise. Until then, work hard and be kind.

-Mrs. Brown

Dear Steve,

Work harder at living in the moment, and appreciating the people around you. The "high school" years pass very quickly, and you only get to experience them once. The future will arrive soon enough; it's a bad idea to want to rush to get there because you'll miss so much in the present. Stop and smell the roses.

-Mr. Morgan

Dear Brandi

Enjoy the time that you have with your friends, that's what you will look back on many years later and remember. Study and do your homework, but don't worry if you make a mistake. Go to the college that makes the most sense for you; don't base your decision on where your friends are going (or not going). Don't worry about dating; the guy you end up marrying is from your hometown but you don't even start talking to him until 4 years after you graduate from high school. Don't be scared to ask for help, and if the first person doesn't help you, ask someone else. Things end up working out for you, even if it doesn't happen in the exact way you had planned.

-Mrs. Lavelly





Dear Christin,

Do what you love (as long as it is safe) and be with people that make you a better version of yourself. Appreciate what you have but also dream for what the future may hold. Just make sure you are also ok with that future possibly changing!

-Mrs. Schmitt

Dear Gina,

Don't worry about the future too much, enjoy your time here at Mercy, be a good friend, really try to listen to what your teachers say, laugh at yourself and always look for ways to help others! Everything turns out for the best in the end and it is important to try and find joy in every day!!!

You are AMAZING and LOVED!

-Mrs Gray

Dear Patricia,

Avoid comparing yourself to others. Embrace how God made you perfect for your unique life journey!

-Mrs. Sattler

DEAR NICOLAS,

STOP TRYING TO BE FUNNY. YOU'RE NOT AS CUTE AS YOU THINK YOU ARE.

-MR. FURIAK

Dear Missy,

Read, read, read! Read anything and everything.

Read biographies, read fiction, read history, read graphic novels, read romance. Get books on audio, get eBooks, get used books, get new books. Reading is the key to success no matter what you intend to do.

-Mrs. Kreucher

Dear Vanessa,

Don't micromanage your feelings.

Feelings are like the "five senses" of your emotions - they don't make you good or bad, they are just there. You CAN control your actions, but don't confuse your actions with your feelings.

-Mrs. Mallory

Dear Kate,

If you hide your true self, you will never feel like you belong. Live life as YOU & find those who love you for yourself.

-Ms. Scalzi

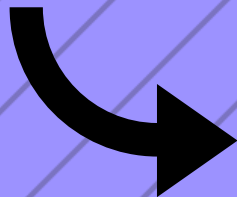


Did you know...

WE'VE ADDED A CALMING TOOLS SECTION
TO OUR
VIRTUAL COUNSELING OFFICE!

.....
*You can find the
Virtual Counseling Office
in your Counseling Schoology Course Materials*
.....

*Once you're in our
Virtual Office,
click the tool box!*



WHAT'S

IN MY>

A FEW OF MY FAVORITE PANDEMIC "SURVIVAL ITEMS"



FOG BLOCK

CALLING ALL OF MY GLASSES-WEARING FRIENDS!!!

This product is by Nerdwax and is the solution to your mask+glasses=blinding fog problems! Buying a Fog Block wipe was the best decision I have made in a log time.

nerdwax.com



CALM STRIPS

If you're like me, I get really antsy and sometimes feel anxious after/during too much zooming and lots of screen time. This textured strip can be brushed, picked at, or scratched with a finger. Since I've stuck a little calm strip to my device, I now have a coping tool at the ready whenever I need a little strategic fidgeting.

calmstrips.net



**Want to try a calm strip?
Mrs. Brown has a few free samples!**

ZURIUKE CANDLES

Scents can be powerful mood boosters and I am in love with this little, local, **Mercy Alum owned** candy and tea company called Zuriuke. My personal favorite scent at the moment is Carmel Praline.

shopzuriuke.com



ACTION ITEMS

for

Allies & Advocates

If you are someone striving to increase your "wokeness",
the Mercy Equity Glossary is for you.

here are a few items:

Individual Racism

Individual racism refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can be deliberate, or the individual may act to perpetuate or support racism without knowing that is what he or she is doing.

Examples:

Telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of whites over other groups; Avoiding people of color whom you do not know personally, but not whites whom you do not know personally (e.g., white people crossing the street to avoid a group of Latino/a young people; locking their doors when they see African American families sitting on their doorsteps in a city neighborhood, or not hiring a person of color because "something doesn't feel right"); Accepting things as they are (a form of collusion).

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Institutional Racism

Institutional racism refers specifically to how institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

Examples:

Government policies that explicitly restricted the ability of people to get loans to buy or improve their homes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans (also known as "red-lining").
City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color.

Microaggression

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

Prejudice

A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or group toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.

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Privilege

Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it, but it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

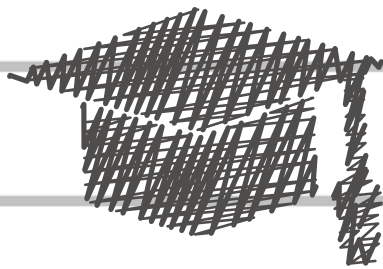
Race

For many people, it comes as a surprise that racial categorization schemes were invented by scientists to support world views that viewed some groups of people as superior and some as inferior.

There are three important concepts linked to this fact:

1. Race is a made-up social construct, and not an actual biological fact
2. Race designations have changed over time. Some groups that are considered "white" in the United States today were considered "non-white" in previous eras, in U.S. Census data, and in mass media and popular culture (for example, Irish, Italian and Jewish people).
3. How racial categorizations are enforced (the shape of racism) has also changed over time. For example, the racial designation of Asian American and Pacific Islander changed four times in the 19th century. That is, they were defined at times as white and at other times as not white. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, as designated groups, have been used by whites at different times in history to compete with African American labor.

COLLEGE CORNER



Virtual College Financial Aid Nights

Provided by Treasury's MI Student Aid team, sessions will be available every Tuesday and Thursday evening during the month of February from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Participants will be able to gather information on the following financial aid topics:

- FAFSA application information
- Federal financial aid programs
- State financial aid programs
- Scholarship searching
- MiSSG Student Portal Accounts

All sessions are open to the public and participants are encouraged to sign up for one session only due to limited space.

Info/Sign-Up at michigan.gov/mystudentaid



UPCOMING COLLEGE FAIRS

**The National Association for
College Admission Counseling
is kicking off a semester of NACAC Virtual College Fairs!**

SIGNATURE FAIRS

Signature Fairs will represent a wide range of colleges

STEM FAIRS

STEM Fairs focus on STEM programs

PERFORMING & VISUAL ART FAIRS

The Performing and Visual Arts Fairs will feature schools and programs focusing on PVA.

**THERE ARE EVEN FAIRS THAT WILL FOCUS ON
COLLEGES IN SPECIFIC REGIONS!**

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER [HERE](#).

CLASS OF 22 COLLEGE PLANNING MEETINGS

I can't believe that it's already second semester of junior year!! That's one step closer to senior year, graduation and college.

In order to assist and support students and families through the college planning process that takes place this year, Mercy's Counselors will provide services to all junior students and their parents in an ***Individual College Planning Meeting***, which will take place virtually via Zoom. These meetings became available in November and take place through February.

This meeting is an opportunity for you and your daughter to meet with her Counselor to focus on the following:

- Review of transcript to discuss high school grade trends
- Discussion about: college admission tests (ACT/SAT) and test preparation, building a college list, and identifying colleges the student has an interest in
- Sharing resources that can assist parents and students in the planning process
- Discuss student and Counselor roles and responsibilities during the college planning and admissions process

To best prepare for the ***Individual College Planning Meeting***, students and parents have important responsibilities:

- Review [**College Planning Presentation here.**](#)
 - **Students** will need to complete the ***College Interest Questionnaire*** found in the Survey section of SCOIR at least two days prior to the meeting. The information gathered will enable us to provide guidance and direction specific to your daughter's interests and needs in regard to college planning.
 - **Parents** will need to complete a "Parent Brag Sheet" which allows you to tell us about your daughter to help assist us when writing a letter of recommendation and building a college list. This form can be accessed in your SCOIR parent account: once logged in, you will see the Surveys link under your name in the left corner. An invitation to SCOIR was previously sent to parents. If you did not set-up your Parent SCOIR account please email your daughter's counselor.
-
- **Parents** also need to schedule the ***Individual College Planning Meeting*** online, using the web address below. These meetings will run through February. **Registration will close 2 days prior to each available meeting date.** When scheduling your meeting, please be sure to schedule a time that works with your schedule and your daughter's schedule. Your daughter will likely need to miss a class. Your daughter can be at home or in the building for this virtual appointment. If she is in the building, she will join her counselor in her counselor's office and together they will meet the parent(s) virtually.

To **schedule an Individual College Planning Meeting**,
visit ptcfast.com/reg1 and use the following entry code:

- Last Names A-G (Mrs. Bennetts) Please use
code: **WZX1345295**
- Last Names H-O (Mrs. Hessler) Please use
code: **FR51357725**
- Last Names P-Z (Mrs. Casey) Please use
code: **L1H1357726**

Counseling will continue our College Planning Meetings through the end of February so we still have a month left to meet. I encourage you to sign up if you haven't already done so. Please contact your daughter's counselor if the days and times listed do not work for you.

We look forward to working with you and your daughter in this exciting process!

.....>

Contact us!

.....>

Holly Markiecki-Bennetts

(10th - 12th grade; Last names A-G)

hbennetts@mhsmi.org

Arpna Hessler

(10th - 12th grade; Last names H-O)

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Kristen Casey

(10th - 12th grade; Last names P-Z)

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CHANGES TO THE SAT

In January 2021, the College Board announced that they will no longer offer the optional essay or SAT Subject Tests. The full College Board announcement can be found [here](#).

So what does this mean for my Marlin?

Subject tests: There are no schools that require the SAT Subject tests, so they have been losing popularity. The College Board cites wider availability of AP testing for students in their press release as well.

Essay: Very few schools require the essay, in fact, the only school we are aware of that requires the writing is West Point. U of M removed this requirement a few years ago. The University of California system used to require writing, however has now gone to a test-free admission policy (this means even if you have a score, they do not look at it). College Admission Professionals, Higher Education Advocates and School Counselors/College Advisors have responded to this news through several different sources.

If you wish to read more about these decisions we encourage you to read the following sources: [INSIDE HIGHER EDUCATION](#), [FORBES](#), [NY TIMES](#)

If you happen to know a student enrolled in a public school in Michigan, the SAT school day test, which is part of the MSTEP State-Wide testing, will still have the essay component for this year. If the State of Michigan chooses to keep the essay as part of their MSTEP program, the essay will remain for this test only. This does not disadvantage non-public school students in the college admissions process.

ACT - We know this is all about the SAT announcement, but you may be wondering, “Is ACT going to drop the essay?” The answer is, we don’t know, but with most schools not requiring the writing, it may not be necessary for your student to sit for the essay portion.

Written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Holly Bennetts

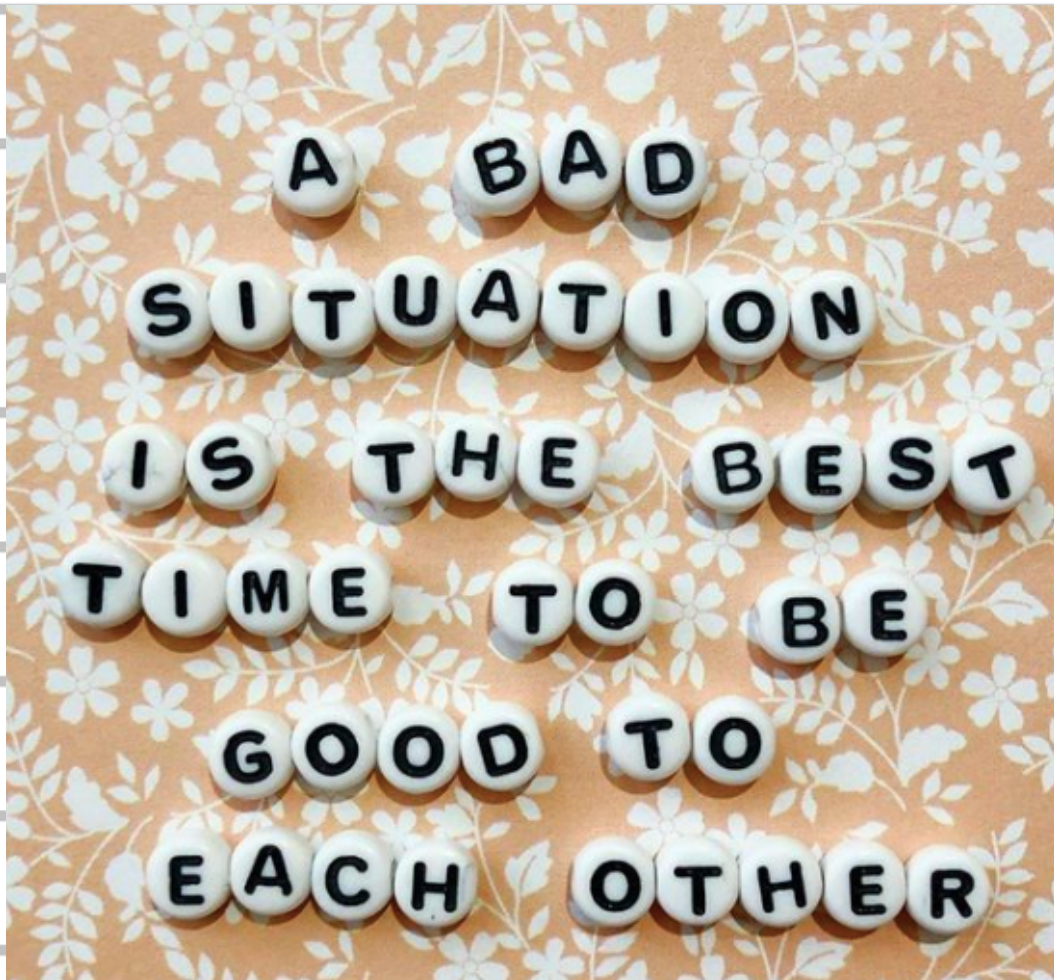


Image used with permission by Danni DiPirro @positivelypresent

College Admissions

Word Association

I will admit, I am guilty of using the words “College Process.” In fact, I have caught myself saying these words in my Junior Family College meetings this week. It really is really more of an adventure or a journey. At some point, there is a process to complete, but that comes when we request transcripts, fill out the data on the application and put together timelines. This is a small part of the actual journey. The journey starts when a student enters high school, and for some, before. Activities the student is involved in, classes they take, the classes they enjoy, in fact, all aspects of high school are part of the journey to life beyond Mercy.

Rick Clark, Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Georgia Tech, created this activity for students and parents to help them rethink the journey. Enjoy!

Introduction written by Mercy Counselor, Mrs. Holly Bennetts

“It’s 7:20! Why are you still asleep?!” I say flipping on the lights and opening the blinds. “My alarm didn’t go off,” mumbled my daughter from under three sheets and four stuffed animals. “What?! I can see your clock says, ‘snooze!’” “I didn’t do that...” “Whatever! Now you aren’t just lying in bed. You’re just straight up lying. You’re sleeping outside tonight, and the sun can be your alarm. Get up!” (You know. The way you talk to a child.)

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I'm not saying I am proud of the threat to sleep outside, but I thought the lying pun was pretty good.

Word Association

You, on the other hand, are not 10. And unless you are a ridiculous multi-tasker, you are not asleep. You are a high school student thinking about college, so don't hit snooze here. Instead, flip on the lights, open the blinds, and let's play a quick word association game. (Do not skip this or skim down the page.) Write down, voice record, or type out the first three to five words or phrases that come to mind when you read or hear the word "college."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now (again, no skimming, skipping, or snoozing), ask one or two people you know who are either in college or who have graduated from college to give you five words and write those down.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

OK. I'm going to trust you to stop reading here and complete the assignment.

Come back when you have your answers and those from the folks you talked to.

And We are back...

What did you get?

Having asked this question around the country in various cities and school communities, particularly when parents are in the room, the responses are usually extremely hopeful, relational, open, and life-giving. I see a lot of smiles and hear answers centering around friends, fun, travel, sports, and learning.

Ok. Now I want you to write down or think quickly about the first three to five words or phrases that come to mind when you read or hear the words "college admission."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How do your answers compare? The students and families I've spoken with typically come up with words like tests, stress, tuition, pressure, and deadlines.

Boo!!

Who popped the balloon?! What happened to the fun, friends, growth, learning, freedom, and opportunity of college itself?

My challenge to you (especially if you are a junior or sophomore just really starting to think about college) is to keep your answers as closely connected as possible. Here is how.

Change one word.

Traditionally, when journalists and college reps talk about admission, they describe it as a process. I want to push back on that concept.

Take a minute and search Google Images for the word “process.”

(Yes. I seriously want you to take out your phone and do this.)

So, what did you find? Probably a lot of flow charts, cogs grinding together, and mechanical, sterile, linear graphics. Notice that almost none of them include other people– unless there is some lonely dude in a lab coat closely examining some colored liquid in a test tube.

If you think of all of this as a process, you begin to believe there is a specific and right way to go about it. Your mindset becomes linear or binary or zero sum (I was bet I could not work those three words into a sentence, so pay up, Chris). Process tightens you up and restricts you to a narrow path that you feel like you must follow perfectly in order to avoid disaster. Process dictates each piece must fit perfectly and flow precisely from one thing to the next.

And then life happens. You make a B+ instead of an A in that history class sophomore year; you don't get elected president of the French Club; you tear your ACL and can't play soccer on the travel team; the research project gets canceled; or I don't know, let's pick something arbitrary... say a global pandemic. If this is a process, then you absolutely should or should not “do this the way your older sister did.” Process is filled with don'ts. Process is a tightrope. Process means if you miss a certain ingredient the recipe is a bust. There is absolutely no room for risk, variance, or divergence.

Now take a minute to search Google Images for “experiences.”

The College Admission Experience

What do you find? And how does it compare to “process?”

These images are more open, fluid, and relational. In these pictures you find people looking out over high places considering their options. They have

vision, variety, perspective, and freedom. The people in these pictures are not trying to control each and every moment. In fact, they seem to be excited about the unknown as opportunity to explore, learn, and discover. There is no forgone conclusion, precise end result, perfect formula, or exact combination. Experiences images are filled with boats in the water or bikes on the trail. Experiences facilitate relationships, inspire dreams, and account for a breadth of decisions, routes, choices, results, and destinations. It sure sounds like we are back to where we started with the answers to association with college.

The truth is that done well the college experience and the college admission experience should be more similar than different. Whether you are a junior, sophomore, or a parent supporting a high school student considering college, my hope is that you take time regularly to pause and check in to see if your five words associated with college and college admission are aligned or divergent. If stress, tests, control, and pressure creep in too much, it is a good sign you need to recalibrate and regain perspective.

How to do that? Might I suggest sleeping outside!



Image used with permission by Danni DiPirro @positivelypresent

P2P Page

A monthly mental health memo by Mercy Peer 2 Peer leadership

The ADAA (Anxiety and Depression Association of America) has a number of techniques to help with all kinds of anxiousness. A few of my favorites:

1. Look at the big picture. Perfection does not exist so instead aim to do your personal best, remembering that you cannot control everything.
2. Take care of yourself. Your physical and mental well-being are closely related, so eat well when you can, exercise daily, and get some sleep.
3. Try and take a moment to yourself; slowly count to ten or take a few deep breaths.
 1. If someone shows signs of a panic attack (shortness of breath, dizziness, etc.), counting to ten to slow their breathing can help.
4. Look on the bright side; for every negative thought, counter it with a positive one.
5. And talk about it. Find a friend, family member, or even a professional, sit down, and start a conversation. Even just having someone you trust there to listen can help immensely when dealing with anxiety.

It is vital that we, as humans, take the time to assess our mental health. Not only will it affect our mental and physical state, but it affects our confidence and self-esteem. Learning about mental health and mental illness, however, can teach us how to help not only ourselves, but those around us. So take the time to really discover the ins and outs of mental health and how to best take care of yourself.

A person's "mental health includes [their] emotional, psychological, and social well-being [which] affects how [they] think, feel, and act." Because of this, it assists in determining how they react to specific emotions/situations and may change in correspondence to one's environment. However, it is important to note that poor mental health is not a mental illness. Mental illnesses are "conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior". Common mental illnesses include Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, referred to as ADHD, mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders, which are the "most common mental illness in the U.S."

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However, most people know the anxious feeling before an exam or presentation. Yet, for nearly 19% of the U.S., an anxiety disorder, such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and phobia-related disorders, cause “intense fear and distress“ which can “prevent [many people] from doing everyday activities”.

But, anxiety disorder are not something to be ashamed or embarrassed about. Many develop these mental illnesses because of genetic makeup, brain chemistry, personality, and specific events. And they are most definitely treatable.

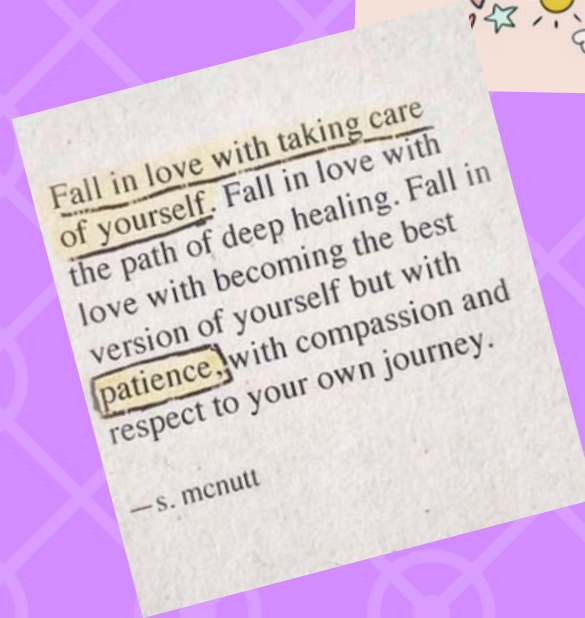
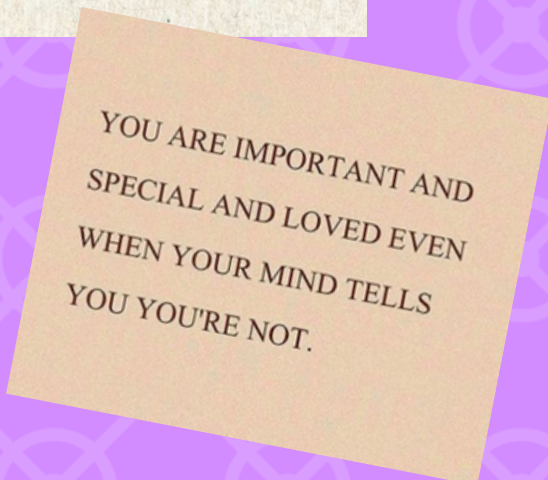
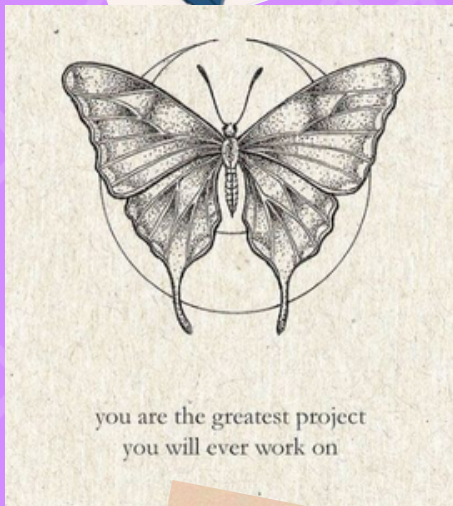
Written by Mercy Peer 2 Peer Leader, Aubrey Etue



WILL YOU BE OUR VALENTINE?

IN HONOR OF VALENTINE'S DAY,

HERE ARE A FEW LOVE NOTES FROM COUNSELING, TO YOU!



— s. mcnut