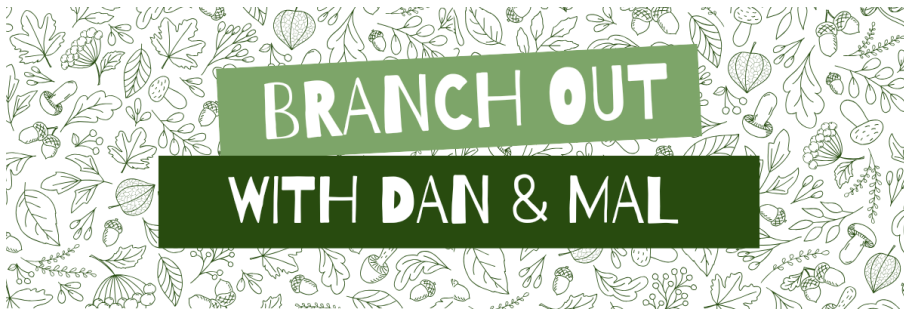




Welcome to Branch Out with Dan & Mal, a weekly newsletter on all things health, wellbeing, and wellness at Midland!

OAKay, Let's Talk...

Mallory's Report:

The start of a new sports season brings excitement and maybe some trepidation, especially for those trying a new sport. There may be a period where your muscles adjust to different movement patterns, like adapting to the agility needed for basketball or the stability and balance required for surfing. We have to give our bodies grace as they adapt to new ways of moving. Here are a few important reminders as we enter our new sports season:

Listen to your body. Rather than pushing past significant muscle soreness, acknowledge it and recognize that your body is doing its best to adapt to new movement patterns.

Advocate for yourself. Once you've recognized what your body is telling you, it's time to speak up. Whether this means talking to the Health Office to make sure you get the care you need or to your coach so they can help you modify appropriately, it's important to articulate your needs.

Prevent injury through smart habits. Injury prevention is all about warming up and cooling down properly, as well as avoiding overuse injuries like shin splints. Take care of yourself: drink water, eat regularly throughout the day, and get enough sleep. You got this!

Dan's Report:

As we've moved deeper into the fall season, one of those impactful changes is now upon us—the time change and longer hours of darkness. For some of us, this can cause a variety of challenges that range from somewhat annoying to requiring clinical intervention. Professionals may refer to this phenomenon as Seasonal Affective Disorder, but I'm less concerned with labels. Instead, let's focus on some remedies for self-care in response. If you're struggling in any way, the following self-care strategies may be worth a try:

Get natural light exposure. Spend time outside, open your blinds, or take short walks throughout the day.

Avoid isolation. Being with people can improve your mood and shift your perspective.

Maintain a consistent routine. Predictable structure can reduce anxiety and help you feel more grounded.

Focus on your nutrition. Different foods can alter your mood and energy levels in meaningful ways.

Avoid alcohol and drugs. These substances may increase symptoms rather than provide relief.

Speak with a health professional if it begins to feel more serious. Don't hesitate to reach out for support.

In the end, do your best to take action! We are here to help if you need it.

In a Nutshell -- Deep Dive of the Week

At some point every November, the school year enters a phase where several influential forces collide, causing a wide variety of emotional reactions. From the college process to grades and comments, from the time change and increased darkness to the looming holidays and breaks, there's a lot to juggle, and we all respond differently. Common themes that usually arise include sharp increases in responsibilities, excitement, exhaustion, sickness, college deadlines, and heightened emotion. As a result, many of us experience a sharp spike in our level of **stress**.

Let's take a look at some tried and tested ways to approach stress management that work for us and may just help you as well:

Daily routine adjustments for the next 4 weeks:

- **Prioritize sleep** – This is when your body and mind recharge.
- **Schedule "you-time"** – Enjoy some music, drink some tea, or relax for even 30 minutes.
- **Learn to say "no"** – Pass on those "extras" until things ease up a bit.
- **Connect with others** – Allow their energy to provide a boost for you.

Relaxation techniques:

- **Deep belly breathing exercise:**
 - Breathe in through your nose for 3-4 seconds
 - Hold it for 3-4 seconds
 - Breathe out through your nose for 3-4 seconds
 - Repeat slowly and deeply as needed

- **Mindfulness or meditation** – Download resources from the Calm app or YouTube.
- **Yoga** – Find videos on YouTube or ask Mallory for self-guided routines.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)** – From head to toe, flex and hold each muscle group for 10 seconds at a time until you've done your entire body. This relieves tension.

Coping mechanisms:

- **Self-talk** – Reframe negative thoughts into more accurate, productive ones.
- **Journaling** – Write down your thoughts and feelings as an outlet to relieve tension and stress.
- **Acceptance** – Focus on what you CAN control.

There are countless ways to take action to effectively manage stress. Just be sure not to avoid it, and seek support if it's too much on your own. Stop by the Health Center any time!

Acorny Ending

We can list off hundreds of ways for you to take care of yourself, but you are the ones who have to take action. We are here to support and encourage, but we can't actually *do* the behaviors for you. It's hard to change your behavior or adopt a new habit! If it were easy, there wouldn't be thousands of books and an entire scientific field dedicated to the matter. You are not alone!

We're on your team—and we're rooting for you.



Mallory McPherson-Wehan
Health Director



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