



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

Winter Break Conversations: A Guide for Families

As your student prepares to come home for winter break, we hope this time offers both rest and meaningful connection. The transition from the busy rhythm of boarding school life to the comfort of home presents a unique opportunity to check in with your student about their wellbeing and growth. We recognize that these conversations aren't always easy to start, so we've gathered some questions and topics across four key areas of student life: mind, body, social connections, and personal space. These aren't meant to be formal interviews, but rather conversation starters that can happen naturally over a meal, during a car ride, or while doing activities together. Your insights and support during this break can help your student return to campus in January feeling refreshed, prepared, and more equipped to thrive in the spring semester.

Mind: Mental Health & Wellbeing

The next three weeks offer a valuable opportunity for your student to refresh their mental health and recharge. We encourage you to talk with your student about reconnecting with friends outside of school, participating in activities that bring them joy, and establishing healthy routines that support their emotional wellbeing. This break can be a time to reflect on what's working well and what they might want to change when they return.

Questions to explore together:

- What has been energizing you this semester? What has been draining?
- How do you currently manage stress or overwhelming feelings at school?
- What activities or hobbies have you missed doing that you'd like to make time for while you are home?
- What does a good mental health day look like for you?

Body: Physical Health, Movement & Hygiene

Winter break is an ideal time to have open conversations with your student about their body, hygiene habits, and physical activity. These discussions help reinforce both personal

care routines and consideration for communal living spaces—understanding that their hygiene choices affect not just themselves but also their roommates.

Topics to discuss:

- How often are you showering and maintaining personal hygiene at school?
- Are you getting enough sleep? What's your typical sleep schedule during the week?
- How much caffeine are you consuming in a day? Are you able to stay awake, focus, and function without caffeine?
- How are you feeling physically overall? Any concerns about health, nutrition, or body changes?
- How does sharing space with others influence your hygiene habits? What does being a good roommate look like in terms of cleanliness?

Social: Relationships & Community

Boarding school life centers around relationships—with peers, faculty, and the broader community. Use this break to help your student reflect on the connections they've made and those they'd like to deepen. Understanding their social landscape can help them feel more intentional about building meaningful relationships in the spring.

Conversation starters:

- Describe your most meaningful connection at Midland—both with a student and with an adult. What makes these relationships meaningful to you?
- Who is someone you'd like to develop a stronger connection with that you haven't yet? What's holding you back?
- What are some ways you can reach out and connect with others when you return that you haven't tried before?
- How do you balance alone time with social time? Do you feel like you have the right balance?

Space: Room Care & Life Skills

Your student's room is their home away from home, and maintaining that space requires practical life skills. Winter break is a perfect time to assess whether your student has the knowledge, habits, and confidence to effectively care for their living environment—skills that will serve them well beyond their boarding school years.

Important topics to cover:

- How often are you washing your sheets and towels? (Recommended: weekly)
- Walk me through your laundry routine—how do you sort, wash, dry, and fold your clothes? Do you feel confident using the laundry machines and understanding the settings?
- How do you and your roommate(s) share responsibility for keeping your room clean?
- Do you have the supplies you need for room care (cleaning products, laundry detergent, etc.)?
- Let's practice: Show me how you'd do a load of laundry from start to finish.

Acorny Ending

We are wishing you all the best Winter Break with your student, and are looking forward to seeing them in the new year!



Mallory McPherson-Wehan
Health Director



Dan Petrocelli
School Counselor

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