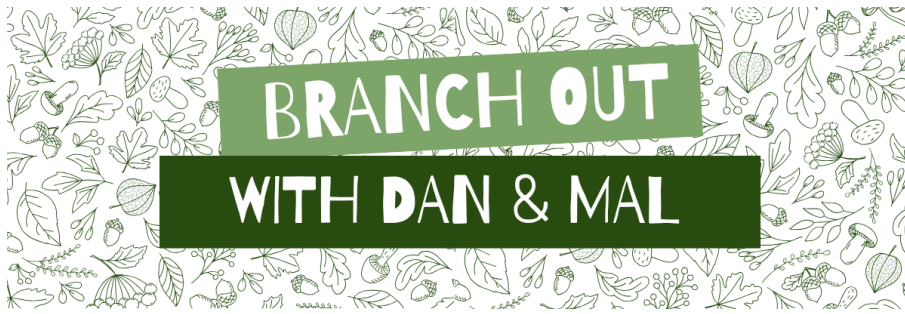




Welcome to Branch Out with Dan & Mal, a weekly newsletter on all things health, wellbeing, and wellness at Midland!

OAKay, Let's Talk...

Mallory's Report:

In 9th and 10th grade seminar this week, we focused on evaluating habits—what's working and what isn't—as part of our ongoing work in self-care, self-management, and self-advocacy. Leah Kaplan and I asked students to reflect critically on their successes (consistently folding laundry, reading before bed, keeping their rooms tidy) and their struggles, and to think about why some habits stick while others don't.

This led to a rich conversation about motivation—specifically, how we push ourselves to do things we'd rather not. One underappreciated form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation: doing something not for the joy of it, but because it aligns with your values or goals. Folding laundry is a perfect example: you want a neat space, you care about having a positive relationship with your roommate, you want to pass room check, so even without enthusiasm, your values can carry you through.

Many of the things we have to do won't ever feel exciting. Integrated regulation is a useful tool for those moments: it roots your motivation in what matters to you, even when the task itself doesn't.

Dan's Report:

Over the past 2 weeks our community has hit its stride again. In the counseling realm our students are not backing down - and I am blown away by the way they're facing life's complex challenges day after day. Parents, I can't tell you how proud we are of your children and we are helping them to run towards the hardest challenges rather than running away. They are willing to trust, wrestling with real life challenges, and learning lessons from when things don't go as planned, or when they do! And the one thing they aren't doing, is giving up! I came here for something different, and the nature we live within is a major part of that. But nothing compares to these students and the inspiration they provide every day!

In a *Nutshell* -- Deep Dive of the Week

One of the most common and complex human challenges is learning how to address FEAR. Fear can be very straightforward at times, like the fear that keeps us safe by not standing too close to the edge of a cliff. But fear can also become a very sly and deceptive force in ways that develop slowly over time, showing itself in the form of “avoidance” or “isolation”. There are many ways that we all choose to defend ourselves to create a sense of safety (sometimes a false sense). Let’s take a dive into some ways that we can begin to face fear:

1. **Becoming Aware:** This is the first step. By doing the work to uncover it, we can begin to take away its mysterious hold over us which takes away its power. This is when we go from feelings to understanding. First we name it! By naming it we can begin knowing what to respond to. It’s hard to fix what we can’t identify. Then, becoming aware of its physical effects such as a racing heart or tight chest can help us learn new ways on how to stay grounded.
2. **Incremental Exposure:** This is a gradual process that takes time and pacing. This helps to slowly build confidence over time. You might begin addressing a fear of heights by starting with looking out of a window of a second story office. Once more comfortable with that, you do it from a higher floor, and so on. The consistency of this process helps our brain relearn the difference between perception and reality.
3. **Cognitive Reframing:** Fear often evolves out of the thoughts we feed our mind. By challenging thought patterns we can reset perspective on the reality of the perceived or sometimes real threat. Consider that we may be adding to its power by “catastrophizing”. Ask yourself, “what is actually the worst that could happen?” Or, “Can I handle this?” The consequences may be more manageable than we think. Then, remind yourself that it’s important to view fear as an opportunity to learn from or a signal that we are stepping outside our comfort zone - not weakness or failure.

It takes courage to face our fears but it is worth doing so even if we need to ask for support. No matter what, the key is to do something about it by taking action. And remember, we are here at the Health Center if it ever feels too challenging to face on your own!

Acorny Ending

We loved every second of hiking up Grass Mountain with you on Tuesday! Truly memories that will last a lifetime for us.

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



Mallory McPherson-Wehan
Health Director



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