

WELLNESS CONNECTION

Your health, your well-being, our priority!



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THIS MONTH'S EVENTS

LETTER FROM MAK

Hello Miners!

With finals right around the corner, we are prepping for winter break here in the Student Well-Being office. For some, spending winter break with family and/or loved ones is a positive and looked forward to occasion; but for others, it can be one of the most stressful parts of the year.

In our final newsletter this semester, we are focusing on ways you can make the most out of this holiday season while away from campus. We have tips for managing stress, strategies for getting through the inevitable family-gathering conflicts, and outdoor and indoor activities perfect for cold weather.

Even though most of us will be off campus over break, remember that Student Well-Being is still here to support your mental health and well-being if you need. We hope you have a relaxing and recharging winter break, and we look forward to seeing you again in January!

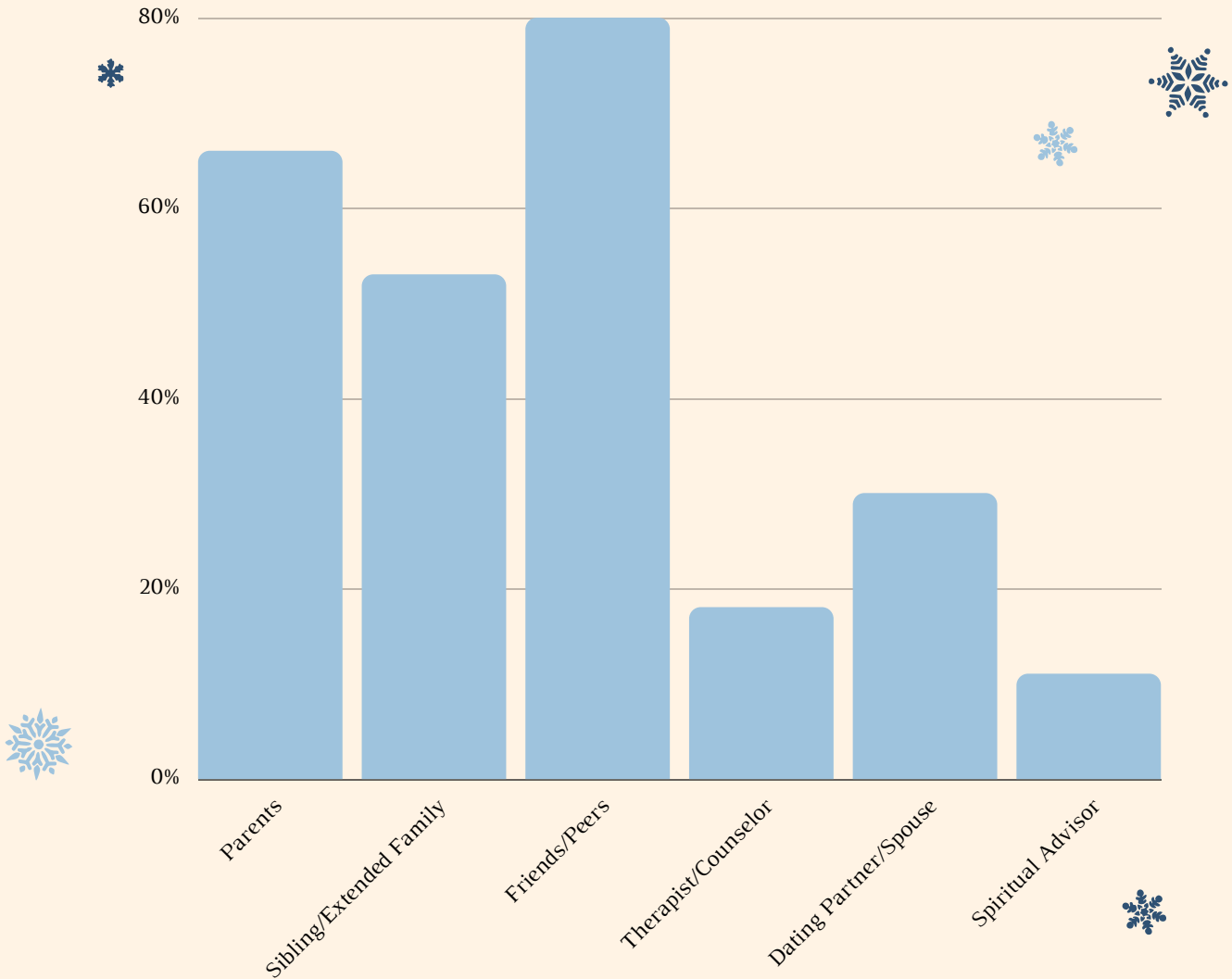
With warm regards,
 Mak the Mole (and *The Student Well-Being Office*)

DATA BRIEF

How S&T Students Manage Concerns Off-Campus

From Student Well-Being

While we are away from campus for the holiday break, it's important to know who we can go to when we are struggling. Below shows who S&T students go to off-campus when personal concerns arise*.



*2022 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors

Think about who you can talk to when stressors come up, both in-person or virtually. Who can you be most open and comfortable with? Who can best understand and support what you are going through? Knowing who you can turn to *before* concerns arise is vital. When disclosing information with them, make sure to be open and honest, let them know how you want them to support you (for example, only being a listening ear versus offering advice), and ensure they understand any privacy you are wanting to maintain (for example, not telling your friends or certain family members).

Always remember that you are not a burden to your loved ones, and your mental health matters. The holiday season can be difficult for many of us, so ensuring you have support systems ready is an invaluable way to make it through the winter.

BOOST YOUR WELL-BEING

The Benefits of Winter Hiking



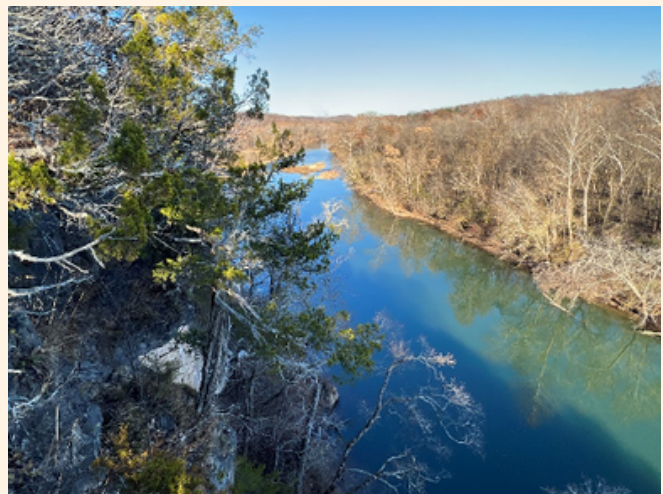
From Graham Rockouski, Sophomore, Aerospace Engineering

As finals approach, the days shorten, and the temperatures cool, students may start to feel mentally and physically fatigued. These problems affect almost everyone in some capacity. Without proper care and attention, they can lead to serious consequences such as a lower GPA, higher probability of dropping out, and less social involvement (Eisenberg et al., 2009). While there are many resources available to students, sometimes nothing seems to help. Finding the right solution can make a world of difference.



After trying some traditional methods of de-stressing such as hanging out with friends, going to bed earlier, and using a daily planner, I found nothing really helped me. It was only after I took a hike that I discovered how much the outdoors can help. I wasn't constantly thinking about the next exam, upcoming assignments, or undone readings, but instead on the birds chirping, the different leaves on trees, and the perfumes the plants left in the air. While the trip didn't quite do my homework for me, it gave me the mental and physical energy to accomplish more things in a day than I normally would in a week. This made sense as according to Mutz & Müller (2016) "[nature walks have] a positive effect on attentiveness, self-awareness and, at the same time, seem to reduce considerably a person's feeling of being under the pressure of, for instance, time, deadlines, and social demands." Due to this personal discovery, I decided to try and venture further into the woods and farther from society. I found the deeper I went, the better I felt.

Sounds like something you might be interested in but don't know where to start? Two professors from S&T's physics department, Dr. Thomas Vojta and Dr. Agnes Vojta, curate the site [Rollahiking.info](https://rollahiking.info). It's a great place to find useful information about nearby trails that anyone can do, from experienced hikers to beginners, and people with impaired mobility. I reached out to Dr. Agnes Vojta and asked her the following questions (next page).



BOOST YOUR WELL-BEING

The Benefits of Winter Hiking (continued)

From Graham Rockouski, Sophomore, Aerospace Engineering

Do you believe hiking has had a positive impact on your mental health? What has it helped (stress, anxiety, etc.)?

“Absolutely! I need it for my physical and mental health. Even in times of greatest stress, I spend one day of the weekend in the woods. Hiking clears your mind, similar to meditation: on an easy trail, you can let the thoughts wander; difficult terrain requires intense concentration that forces you to be completely in the moment. The combination of physical activity, fresh air, and being in nature alleviates stress and depression.”

What would you say to people that have never gone hiking before and don't know how to start?

“Just try it! You don't need expensive equipment, just some comfortable walking shoes. Join an experienced friend or a group, or choose a well-marked trail, maybe in one of the State Parks, grab the trail map from the park office, and set out. Take a backpack with water, snacks, and a rain jacket if the weather looks iffy.”

What's your recommended trail for beginners near Rolla?

“We have the Audubon preserve right here in town, with several short trails totaling three miles. There are two 1-mile trails at Lane Springs Recreation Area which is open March through October. If you want to venture a bit further, both Onondaga Cave State Park and Meramec State Park have several well-marked trails that are great for beginners.”

Even as we shift into winter, hiking is still something you can, and should try. Often, people suffer from low vitamin D during the winter due to staying indoors more than the other seasons. All you need is some warm clothes! A good hat, pair of gloves, warm socks, and jacket are important. You might find taking a pair of boots over shoes is beneficial as well. The start of the trail might be cold, but once you get moving, you'll feel nice and warm.

While hiking isn't a secret cure to mental and physical health problems, it has been proven to help. I implore everyone to give it a shot. Chances are you'll feel mentally and physically refreshed and ready to get things done. Even if it doesn't, you'll at least be able to enjoy the outdoors and see beautiful sights.



BOOST YOUR WELL-BEING

Home for the Holidays- Managing Conflict and Stress

From *Student Well-Being* and [VeryWell Mind](#)

The holidays present many wonderful opportunities to bond with family or loved ones, but this time of year can also present significant stress, particularly when interpersonal conflict arises. Interpersonal conflicts are natural and normal for every family unit, regardless who or how many people you consider to be in this unit.

For those of us that go home to our parental units for the holiday season, going back to your childhood home is often a set up for conflict, distance, and strain in your adult relationship as old ways of relating and managing conflict reemerge. But, with a bit of planning and using the tips below, you can hopefully reduce that conflict and strain to a minimum!

Prepare answers to common/anticipated conversation topics

We probably know our loved ones well enough to know what questions they are going to ask and where their priorities are. Some common topics that we often get asked about are academics ("How are classes going?"), dating ("So are you seeing anyone? You know my coworker has a daughter at S&T you should meet!"), and overall quality of life ("Are you eating well enough there?"). Think of expected conversation topics and plan out how you want to answer. It doesn't have to be scripted, but more knowing you can help control where the conversation goes. If you have loved ones you are especially close to and trust, consider telling them the topics you want to avoid so they can help you navigate conversations.

Manage your expectations

We all have a relative or loved one that says the wrong things, goes too far, or doesn't always respect boundaries. Make sure you adjust your expectations of that person as to protect your own feelings and emotions.

Remember that no family is perfect. Even if you have the most positive attitude possible, it is still very possible for conflicts to arise. Try to accept your family for who they are and not expect an entirely perfect visit.

Make plenty of time for yourself

For a lot of us the holiday season is extremely busy as we are scrambling to see everyone. Despite this, make sure you schedule in plenty of time for yourself to relax, decompress, and to do the things you want to do. When going to large gatherings, consider bringing something with you (like a book) to use when overstimulated, or drive separately when possible to control how long you are there.

Pick your battles

Accepting your family for who they are comes hand in hand with understanding their flaws. It is possible that certain members will irritate you, or potentially even anger or trigger you. When issues do arise, ask yourself whether this interpersonal conflict is worth pursuing. If not maybe it is something that you can manage internally by taking a moment to yourself and practicing mindful breathing. If it *is* worth pursuing, try to leave emotions out of it, argue calmly, and step away when it becomes too much or an agreement cannot be reached.



FEATURED RESOURCES

SuperBetter

Looking for a new game to play on your phone? Looking to build resilience and improve your mental health? Why not cover both with SuperBetter!

SuperBetter was invented by a game designer and uses a unique methodology that uses the psychology of game play to build life skills, overcome obstacles, and increases social-emotional awareness. Playing SuperBetter unlocks heroic potential to overcome tough situations and achieve goals that matter most to you.

SuperBetter can be used as an app or online and is free for all users. It is backed by scientific evidence, proving to be effective in multiple trials.

To learn more and to start playing, visit superbetter.com or find it in your device's app store.



Morning Cup of Joe Podcast

Start your mornings of right with a listen to Morning Cup of Joe, a new podcast for S&T students, presented by Student Well-Being.

The podcast, recorded by Student Well-Being's counselors, uses pop culture to explore mental health topics relevant to S&T students and the S&T community at large. Some topics that have been covered so far are handling rejection, setting SMART goals, working with difficult people, sleep hygiene, coming out, and more.

Each episode features a different pop culture reference to help connect the topic to examples in the media! You can learn about dealing with difficult people from the cast of The Office or sleep hygiene with sleep deprivation examples from Fight Club.

New episodes are released each week during the semester. Learn more and listen at bit.ly/morningcupofjoe.



MINDFUL MOMENT

New Books to Read Over Break

From Goodreads

Hover over and click on each book cover to view on Goodreads.



Even Though I Knew the End, C.L. Polk (fantasy, mystery, LGBT, historical fiction)



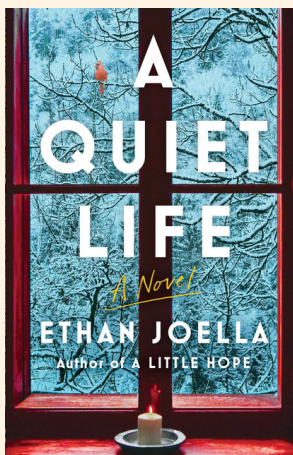
The Poison Season, Mara Rutherford (YA, fantasy, mystery, romance)



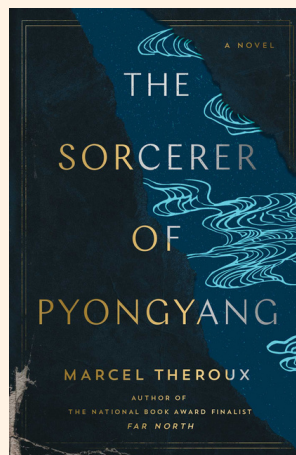
The Key to My Heart, Lia Lois (romance, holiday-Christmas)



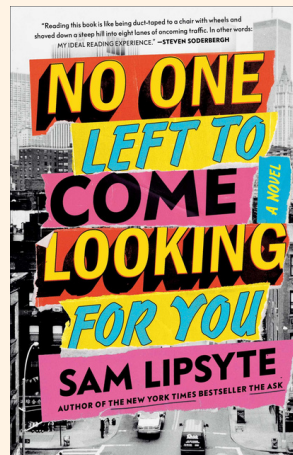
The World Record Book of Racist Stories, Amber Ruffin & Lacey Lamar (non-fiction, memoir, humor, race)



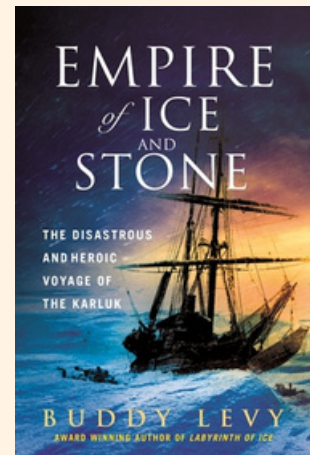
A Quiet Life, Ethan Joella (literary fiction, family, drama)



The Sorcerer of Pyongyang, Marcel Theroux (historical fiction, fantasy, cultural, D&D)



No One Left to Come Looking for You, Sam Lipsyte (mystery, thriller, literary fiction, music)



Empire of Ice and Stone, Buddy Levy (non-fiction, adventure, survival)



MINDFUL MOMENT (CONTINUED)

DIY Pom Pom Holiday Tree Craft

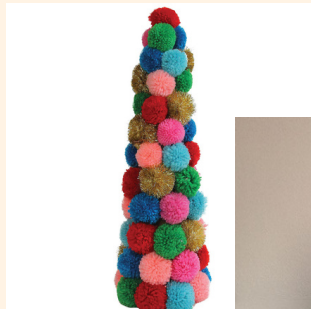
From Student Well-Being staff

SUPPLIES

- Foam craft cone
- Desired colors/sizes of pom poms
- Hot glue or super glue
- Any other desired decorations

DIRECTIONS

1. Gather all supplies on a clean flat surface.
2. For each pom pom, place small dot of glue on craft cone and hold pom pom in place for a few seconds.
3. Once pom poms are finished, decorate with any other desired items/decorations.
4. Ensure glue is dry and all pom poms/decorations are stable before moving the cone.
5. Display!



GET IN TOUCH



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UPCOMING DATES

December 9: Last Day of Classes

December 12-16: Finals Week

December 16-17: Commencement

December 25: Christmas Day

December 26-January 2: University Closed

Want to be featured in the newsletter? Submit original content, such as a personal piece, poem, short story, photographs, recipe, or other form of content to wellbeing@mst.edu. Content may be edited for clarity and length. Pictures must be submitted as a JPEG or PNG. All submissions must follow University policy. All submitted content will be used at the discretion of Student Well-Being. Content can be published credited to you or anonymously, whichever you prefer.