

The Nature of

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Mentality

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Mentality

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And thank you to all our staff who helped produce this edition!

disclaimer:

Some of our content could be emotionally triggering to those who can relate or have experienced similar struggles. If you find yourself becoming uncomfortable while reading, please take a moment for yourself. If you would like to speak to a professional, resources are listed at the end of our magazine.

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W W W . M E N T A L I T Y

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

According to the first entry in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a habit is defined as “a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior.” Personally, I prefer entry 2c, which defines a habit as “a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance.” This definition emphasizes our ability to change and form individual habits.

As this is my last semester as the Editor-in-Chief of Mentality Magazine, I’m proud to present our eighth print volume: “The Nature of Habit.” Our entire Mentality staff has worked endlessly these past months to share this semester’s edition. While reading these pieces, I hope you can connect with some of the habits our writers have shared while being gracious of their openness and confidence in sharing their personal thoughts.

Habits and mental health are very closely related. As defined above, habits are simply an act that you perform repeatedly. Whether you unconsciously formed a habit or frequently repeated something until it became one, habits affect us in ways that we often don’t notice. I’m no exception. The development of both my conscious and subconscious habits have shaped me as an individual. For instance, I experienced verbal abuse in the form of insults for years. As a result, I grew up with a voice in my head that was constantly belittling until I gradually forced myself to think of affirmations as a substitute. After years of practice, I can happily say that I’m almost always successful. When I’m not, though, I try to remind myself to keep trying. It’s a work in progress, but I think this habit has helped me far more than I can even imagine.

Mentality Magazine has been, and will always be, an amazing outlet for me and for our members. When I first joined Mentality Magazine, I started as a writer and witnessed the creation of our very first print volume. Now, as Editor-in-Chief for the release of our eighth volume and with graduation on the horizon, I am more than happy to share that Liz Hoornstra, our current Events Coordinator, will be taking over as the next Editor-in-Chief of Mentality. She has wonderful ideas for the future of Mentality Magazine, and I know she will be successful. Mentality may only be four years old, but watch out because we are steadily growing.

As you’re reading through the pages of this edition, I hope you can form parallels with the habits of our writers, so that their stories will make you reflect on and evaluate the ways in which your habits affect your mental health. Hopefully, you can try to change the habits that are negatively impacting your mental health and continue the habits that have a more positive effect.



Jenie Li, Editor-in-Chief


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HABITUALLY OVERTHINKING

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY SARA SMITH



When we discuss habits, we often have a very concrete view. You should keep good habits, and you should break bad habits. That's what I thought until recently, when I was talking with my therapist about a good habit I had last year. I used to wake up at 5:50am every morning to go to the gym for a workout. It was the perfect start to my day, and I was proud of my motivation. Now, however, I don't even get out of bed until 8:00am most days. Seeing my lack of a morning workout as a new bad habit, I told my therapist, "I don't know why I don't do this anymore. It made me feel great, and I loved it!"

My therapist then asked me to name all of the ways my life has changed from last year to this year. I started listing many complex changes regarding relationships and mental health, but she challenged me to think simpler. I quickly came to the realization that I don't go to the gym at 6:00am anymore because I no longer live across the street from a gym. That explanation seemed too simple, but it was the truth.

Last year, it took me maybe 2 minutes to walk to the gym. Now, if I decided to go to the gym at 6:00am, I would have to bundle up, walk 15 minutes to the CCRB in the dark when it's so cold that I can see my breath, work out for an hour, and then walk back feeling even colder as my sweat starts to freeze. Nobody wants to do that! There doesn't have to be some deep reason for why I don't have this habit anymore, nor does it say anything about my morals or who I am as a person. It doesn't mean my depression is getting worse or that I'm lazy. It just means that I do not want to force a previously formed good habit into my life after circumstances have changed and it just doesn't work. As a writer who always thinks about everything way too intensely, I'm learning to accept that not everything has to be deep and complex. Who says that thinking simpler can't be my new habit?

Spinning Negativity

WRITTEN & DESIGNED BY JENIE LI

Growing up, I was bullied.

Ugly.

Fat.

These negative thoughts ran rampant constantly.

Useless.

Disappointing.

They became my only thoughts.

Disgusting.

Stupid.

It seemed impossible to break.

Until...

It started out small.

Average.

Normal.

Then it got better.

Successful.

Kind.

Finally, it was positive.

Smart.

Beautiful.

It's neither easy nor fun, but it's possible.



LEAVING GHOSTING BEHIND: THE ONE HABIT YOU SHOULD NOT IGNORE

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY LIZ HOORNSTRA

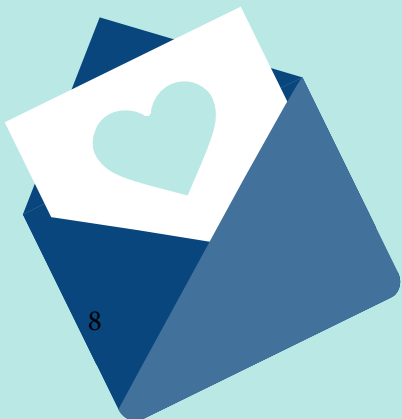
Typically, we think of habits as actions that are restricted to individual beings: “I have a habit.” “They have a habit.” “She is so responsible, she commits to this each day.” “If only he would consistently do that, he would be so successful.” However, what we neglect to think about is how we as groups and as a society fall into patterns of action and socially acceptable behaviors – habits.

So now is the time to talk about one of our society’s habits. Most prevalent in younger, tech-savvy generations, now is the time to have a conversation about ghosting. Sometimes it happens all at once, other times, it’s a slow fade where replies become shorter with more time in between. Sometimes it’s confusing...and sometimes it’s expected? Nevertheless, for me, the first emotion that comes to mind is enraged. But that doesn’t really capture the whole story. Why am I angry?

When I take a moment to think about it, I actually feel disrespected. Vulnerable. Anxious. Not to mention a little bit of trauma as a result of someone I used to be close to who used the silent treatment as a way to punish and disrespect me.

To be honest, I don’t understand how someone can think it’s acceptable to get to know someone, invest time into reaching out, and then not give them a notification that it is not going to work out. I don’t think it has to even be the cliché “it’s not you, it’s me” line. Because the truth is, it’s both you and them. Both of you are complex, unique, amazing beings with different values and interests, and sometimes those values and interests don’t align. And there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, I would feel more respected if someone acknowledges that I value my time and myself, and then uses this information to understand all of the intricacies, vulnerabilities, and risks that come with being willing to introduce someone into your life in a potentially romantic way.

The last feeling. Anxiety. A combination of fear, worry, and overthinking. A feeling more representative of my actions, or reactions, than the other person’s actions. While I truly believe that ghosting is representative of the ghoster — of their fear and inability to authentically communicate their feelings — it still leaves me questioning myself and my worth. I still have to reaffirm to myself that I am valued, respectable, and that my ability to be vulnerable by opening up and sharing myself with others is strength.



Hello, are you there?

Read, yesterday

I understand that ghosting is a 'habit' in a sense, a societal habit. Even I am guilty of ghosting once or twice (although, I am not necessarily proud of that fact). Also, let me clarify: Ghosting is not limited to romantic endeavors, it happens with friends, family, and even professionals. Many times, someone will see a text and choose not to respond. While this is reasonable when you are caught up in another engagement or need to look up the correct information to respond, sometimes we leave each other on 'read' with no intention of getting back to them anytime soon. It is at this point that I question why we cannot take the minutes, or even seconds, to reply saying, "I am busy/not sure about the answer/etc and will get back to you ASAP". It is as if we don't care that we will be causing our conversational counterpart these same emotions that we feel when 'ghosted'. Dating apps add another layer of circumstances to the situation, with 'relationships' starting and then 'ending' after sharing only a few messages or even a date with no indication of where you stand.

I do understand the reasons to ghost for your own emotional health. Sometimes you need to take time for yourself, to distance yourself from others and focus on your goals and wellbeing. To be honest, the person you are leaving on 'read' or ghosting could even be contributing to your lack of wellbeing. At that point in time, leaving them behind to figure out the message on their own is the best choice for you in the moment. However, once a friendship or relationship endures, the negative consequences on the trust and valuation of the other person is heightened. Leaving someone on 'read' once or twice is commonplace, an accident, something excusable. However, when that trust is not as well defined or built up, ghosting strains a relationship.

Thus, despite leaving others on 'read' and ghosting becoming common practice, as well as with a universally accepted message of disregard from a lack of a responding message, there is still a sting when you are conversing with someone regularly and then...nothing. More so, this repeated give and give without any take becomes emotionally taxing, especially in a time when relationships are devalued in college where work-life balance becomes non-existent.

So in a society where it is becoming increasingly normalized to hide emotions and act unbothered, recognize that not everyone is unbothered by your actions. I call on everyone to seek to understand the importance and value it takes someone to share themselves with you and to respect that. So the next time you decide to ghost, take a moment to reflect on the other person and if it is necessary to instill these same feelings in them.



iMessage



The Nature of Habits

Written by Nate Misra

Designed by Sydney Kim

Overcast shrouded the sky, and rays from the sun above illuminated the otherwise dull clouds. The humid Michigan air carried heat trapped below; it must have been close to 90 degrees. Despite the unbearably hot weather, there was Annie, our new pup, running circles in the yard. She tired herself out and proceeded to gulp down an entire bowl of water, before running straight for my mother's pachysandra. It was my mother's favorite perennial. My mother screamed "NO!", but it was all too late; Annie had managed to empty her bladder on the shrubbery and then took off kicking up some of the plants in her swift escape. From that day on, she consistently went there to pee.

I began to notice other tendencies that Annie had too: she would always run in circles when we chased her, she avoided the room we stored the vacuum cleaner, and whenever she came in from outside, she would roll on her back to scratch it. All of these habits were unique to Annie, and yet she also shared many of her other habits with the general dog population. She would always roll into a ball before bed and she would pee where other dogs had peed. Were these really habits, however, or just ways of life? It could be argued that a habit can only be defined as a unique behavior that an individual possesses as opposed to just any plain tendency. Otherwise, for humans, walking on two legs and breathing could be considered habits, when they are simply just ways of life.

So in Annie's case, the only true habits she had were peeing in the pachysandra, running in circles, and avoiding the vacuum cleaner room. It's interesting the way in which other species form habits just as we do. Perhaps habits have the ability to provide some evolutionary advantage. An individual in a species may form a habit, and if that habit is advantageous for survival, then naturally it will be passed down become more widely adopted within that species. Maybe the first bipedal primates had abnormal habits, but then it eventually gave them an edge in survival. Of course there are genetic mutations that cause the physical differences, but those genes can also cause behavioral differences.

It has been found that genetics do play a role in habits for humans as well. A fine example of this is the heritability of addiction. A study by The National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) revealed that "Heritabilities of addictive disorders range from 0.39 for hallucinogens to 0.72 for cocaine" ¹. A number of 1 would represent perfect correlation; therefore there is a significant association to be found between genetics and habits. It's not that the actual behavior of cocaine use is preprogrammed, but rather the addictive personality is, making someone more predisposed to form addictive habits. This could be said, possibly, about people who bite their nails; that specific behavior is not preprogrammed, but they may have a gene that makes them more nervous or anxious and the nail biting is just a formed habit that results.



If this is the case, then habits are simply just coping mechanisms formed as a reaction to the environment surrounding the subject through the filter of their genetic predispositions. Imagine a game of Topgolf. There are several pits the ball can land in, they all vary in size, and because of this, there are much greater odds for the ball to land in the bigger pits if the club is swung randomly. The person swinging at the golf ball is the agent, making the decision as a reaction to the environment; they may aim for a smaller pit, but the ball is still predisposed to have a greater chance of falling into the larger pits. The pits in this analogy are like the genetic predispositions, and while the agent may aim for something else and has the choice to do so, there are certain behaviors they are more likely to adopt.

A recent study by Rajita Sinha and her colleagues at Yale School of Medicine revealed just that. They found that there are 11 genes that relate to addiction, but also that patients who may possess these genes can overcome the addiction through high activity in the prefrontal cortex ². This would explain why so many talk therapies have been found to be effective in treating addictions, as they activate that part of the mind. Habits are formed as a reaction to the environment filtered through genetic predispositions, and while some may be playing a game that seems all but rigged against them, there is hope and treatments that are successful at overcoming certain genetic traits. This study is great news to many out there who may feel they are forever destined to be stuck to their habits. There may be a bias to form certain good or bad habits from genetics, but there are proven ways to combat it.

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I handwrite all my notes, even though typing notes may be easier or faster. It seems an unimportant part of my day, but it helps me to remember lectures through visualization of my self-designed formatting.

Liz Hoorstra



I have been working lately on learning how to balance time working and time with friends. I plan to improve this even more, but I'm proud of it.

Nikki Corrunker

Eating healthy proportions.

Nate Misra

I would love to form a habit of studying for exams earlier.

Katie Good

I would like to wake up early to get a head start on the day, whether it's for going to get a morning workout or make breakfast or get work done early.

Jenie Li

Going to the gym.

Nate Misra

I would like to form a better eating habit. I want to learn how to cook healthier for myself since I live on my own now.

Nikki Corrunker

I want to start drinking more water.

Diane Yu

I am currently trying to take time to reflect on three things I am grateful for each day.

Liz Hoorstra

I would like to make more of an effort to reach out to both of my younger siblings on a more regular basis to see what they're up to.

Sydney Kim

I want to be more firm about saving money. Right now I make sure to never spend as much as I'm making, but I want to start keeping track of set amounts that I'm saving from each paycheck, and what I'm saving that amount towards.

Kaylina Savela

Eating at home more often.

Victoria Helrigel

Waking up at the same time every day.

Sara Smith

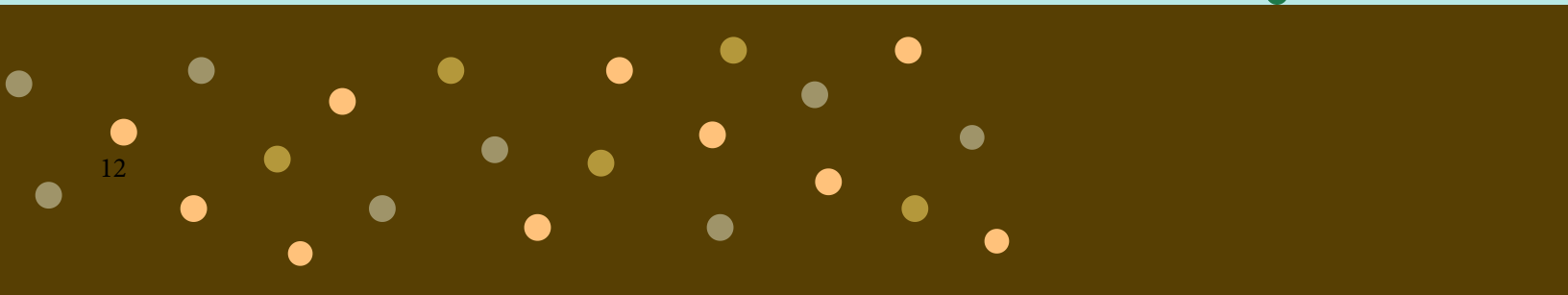
Routinely exercising.

Molly Effros



"What's a good habit"

"What's a habit you want to form?"



Every week I deep clean my dorm room so I start the week neat and tidy.

Katie Good

Lists. I am really good about keeping track of things, prioritizing, and compartmentalizing.

Sydney Kim

Procrastinating,
Victoria Helrigel

When I don't have to stay up too late doing homework, I always read at least a chapter before bed so that the last thing I look at isn't a screen.

Kaylina Savela

I call my parents everyday (even just to say hi) because I think that time is limited with the people you love.

Jenie Li

I procrastinate a lot for important things and then stress that I won't have enough time.

Nikki Corruiker

I meal prep healthy lunches and dinners every week.

Sara Smith

Remaining calm in stressful situations.

Molly Effros

Staying in contact with the people who matter.

Victoria Helrigel

Seeking validation through men that don't respect me.

Molly Effros

I tend to pick at the skin of my fingers, and I've been trying to stop that for forever.

Diane Yu

Whenever I'm having a good day, I like to send my friends positive gifs!

Diane Yu

Biting my nails!

Katie Good

I've been biting my nails for as long as I can remember.

Sara Smith

Eating out when I am too lazy to cook.

Liz Hoornstra

I tend to stay in bed after waking up, just passing the time by on my phone or drifting in and out of sleep.

Jenie Li

Drinking too much.

Nate Misra

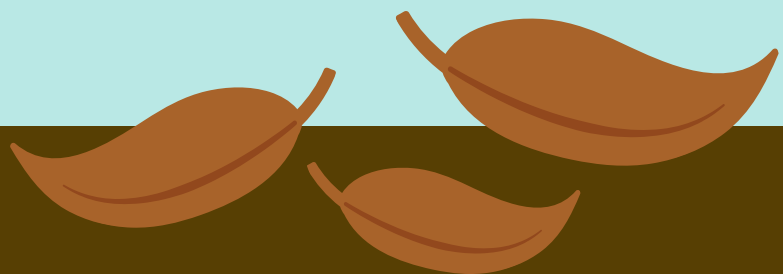
I would like to work on staying calm and logical rather than instantly panicking when things don't go quite to plan or if my carefully curated schedule falls apart. I need to work on being more flexible.

Sydney Kim

When I get stressed, I pick at my nails.

Kaylina Savela

that you're proud of?"



Transitioning Habits

Written and Designed by Katie Good

We all have our favorite blanket. Whether it's at home or in the dorms, there's a level of comfort you feel when you're under *that* blanket. In high school, sleeping under that blanket was my habit. As soon as I got home from school, I would flop on the couch, burrito myself into my Dr. Seuss knotted heaven, and conk out for the next hour. No matter how bad my day was, my blanket was waiting for me. I couldn't imagine a day without it.

As I was packing this fall for my first semester at Michigan, I kept eyeing that blanket. I was told that college is supposed to be a 'fresh start'; should I leave behind what I think of as home? For days, the blanket was hastily thrown in and out of the packing pile as I switched between being excited and terrified for college. Just minutes before I left for Ann Arbor, I made the decision; that damn Dr. Seuss blanket was coming with me. I told my mom that it was because Michigan would get cold and it couldn't hurt to have some extra layers. In reality, I couldn't bear the thought of leaving home to 'start fresh' without such a constant piece of my life.

For the first few weeks of college, that blanket was my savior. On any day where I was feeling lonely or stressed, wrapping myself in that blanket took me back home. It was a sense of physical security and warmth that a FaceTime call with my parents couldn't give me. It was like a hug from my best friend, even though she was hundreds of miles away. Everything and everyone I had loved was in that blanket.

As the first few months of school went by, the blanket became more of a decoration than a necessity, and the habit of napping with my blanket faded as being on my own became easier. Now, as I sit here looking at the blanket neatly folded on my bed, I see unforgettable memories of my life before Michigan. Yet instead of longing to be back in those days, I appreciate what they taught me, and how they got me to where I am now.

As Michigan slowly becomes more of a home for me, I find myself forming new habits and new attachments to my tiny dorm room. Yet instead of being afraid of leaving behind these habits when I move out in May, I'm excited. I can't wait to have my blanket in my apartment next year, sitting next to the objects that remind me of freshman year. There's nothing wrong with bringing pieces of your past with you during transitional periods; allow yourself to miss home. Eventually, you'll learn to love where you are and, as my mom always says, "bloom where you are planted."

HABITS THROUGH THE LENS OF BEHAVIOR THERAPY

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY DIANE YU

When someone says “behavior therapy,” it calls to mind images of mice in cages being shocked until they learn how to press the right button, or bright, sterile lights and cold scientists providing punishment and reinforcement until the subject has executed the correct behavior. But any behavioral therapist could tell you that behavior therapy is much more than that—and it’s something that you use (or could be using!) all the time.

There’s a common misconception that behavior therapy rests on the tenets of punishment (like when your phone was taken away by your parents for texting too much) and reinforcement (like when you let yourself get a little something from Amazon for getting through a particularly rough week). While these are categories of techniques in behavior therapy, it’s really the behavior that matters, not how you treat it.

Think of all of your lazy ‘bad’ habits. All the dishes that you don’t wash, the laundry that you don’t do, the (really quite disgusting) shower drain that you’ve really been meaning to clean for the past month, you swear. These are what are called *acceleration target behaviors*—“acceleration,” because you want to make them go faster, so to speak. They’re behaviors that you don’t do enough of, and hopefully by the end of whatever process you choose to go through, are the ones that you’ll be doing more of.

However, there’s a whole other category of ‘bad’ habits that also need to be addressed. Maybe you check your phone too much, maybe you bite your nails, maybe you buy one too many coffees from the coffee shop down the street ‘cause it’s just so much more convenient than making it at home. These are *deceleration target behaviors*, since you want them to stop.

Deceleration target behaviors are harder to deal with than acceleration behaviors, since you’re getting rid of something in your life—after all, what are you going to do with yourself if you’re not checking your phone? As much as you’d hate to admit it, there’s just a void in your life without your daily Espresso Royale coffee or hourly (half-hourly?) Instagram or Snapchat update. This is why deceleration target behaviors are usually dealt with by pairing them with acceleration target behaviors, typically through differential reinforcement. *Differential reinforcement* is what you do when you reward yourself for doing your homework instead of scrolling through Twitter for the third hour of the day. While it’s not *impossible* to be on your phone while studying, it’s still pretty hard. So in the process of *decreasing* your phone usage, you’re *increasing* your homework and study time—win-win all around!

Now, clearly, if things were so simple, we’d all be better at managing our time than we are. This is where the reinforcement and punishment come in. Reinforcement is anything that causes you to want to keep doing a behavior—for some of us, it was the praise from our parents for getting a good grade, and for others, it was the reprieve from the constant nagging once you finally go do your homework. (For those of you who are

curious, the former is *positive reinforcement*, whereas the latter is *negative reinforcement*.) The flip side is punishment: anything that makes you want to *stop* doing a behavior. Maybe your parents took away your TV privileges for that bad test grade or didn't get you that gift you wanted because you didn't quite manage to get the grades you were aiming for. (Assuming you're always allowed to watch the TV, that would be *positive punishment*, and the other is *negative punishment*. This distinction is murky, but positive punishment relies on introducing a negative consequence, whereas negative punishment removes a desirable consequence; in this case, the gift you were looking forward to.) As you may expect, reinforcement is more effective in the long-term for establishing the desired target behavior, but punishment is attractive for short-term solutions.

At this point, you might be asking, "What does this all mean for my habits?" Good question! Reinforcements and punishments are all about what the individual person likes and dislikes. Maybe you'd be willing to sit through an hour of homework for a chocolate chip cookie, but your friend couldn't care less. Ask yourself: what do you like? What do you spend a lot of time doing? Or, if you're looking on the other end of the spectrum: what *don't* you like? And even more importantly: what are you willing to part with? A problem that many people run into while setting reinforcers and punishers is that they're not actually willing to give up the thing that they said they'll give up. Of course, this is easier when you've got someone else holding you accountable (hint: this is when you rope your roommate into your scheme), but it's something you'll have to keep in mind if you're planning on using self-reinforcement.

There are other techniques that you can use, too. The Premack principle relies on differential reinforcement of a low frequency behavior with a high frequency behavior. To get yourself to drink more water, tell yourself to take a swig of water every time you pick up your phone. It doesn't even have to be a behavior you enjoy—don't put on your shoes until you've finished that glass of water. You can also rely on a token economy: if you want to aim for a bigger target, give yourself little stickers or even points for getting closer to your target. Once you've accumulated enough stickers or points, *then* you can go get that slice of cake.

But behaviors rely on more than just their consequences; what you experience *before* the behavior is just as important. The buzzing that you feel from your phone when you receive a notification is an antecedent to checking your phone, which makes it all the harder to study when you're tempted to check it every time you hear that ding or feel it vibrate (Do Not Disturb is a handy tool!). This is also why it's not a great idea to study in your bed, no matter how comfy it seems; your brain has already associated your bed with rest and relaxation, and unless you've got a single-minded determination, it's not likely that you'll get much done there. *Antecedents* include everything from setting events (what you experience in your environment that influence you to do something) to prompts (which remind you to perform a behavior). This can range from putting a post it note on your mirror to remind you to floss to having a set study spot where you just do work. Changing up your routine can help you break out of that rut, so maybe consider taking a different

route to class so you don't pass Sweetwaters on your way to Mason Hall.

Now, I've just thrown a whole lot of information at you. While I'd love for you to come away from this with an enthusiastic new interest for behavior therapy, there's a few key tips to keep in mind:

1. *Be as specific as possible with everything that you're doing.* Know exactly which behavior it is that you want to change, and where you want it to end up. "Drinking more water" is vague—do you want to drink more bottles of water? How many more? Are you looking to decrease the amount of soda and coffee you're drinking? Be clear with yourself, and you'll have an easier time hitting your goal.
2. *Be aware of your behaviors.* Maybe you don't think you're studying more, but it's actually because all of the time you usually spend texting is actually going into studying, so you finish faster. Or, maybe your reinforcer isn't doing anything for you at all—don't be afraid to change things up if you don't notice an effect.
3. *The reinforcer matters.* Change lasts the longest when it's reinforced by something that happens naturally. While it might help to start out strong, going out of your way to buy a new pair of headphones to get yourself through every essay isn't exactly sustainable. Gradually weaning yourself off reinforcers will help to solidify the new habit into your schedule and be reinforced naturally through things that happen in your life anyway.

Hopefully, by the end of this, you'll have added a couple more tips and tricks to your arsenal of skills to help you finally kick or pick up that habit that you've been meaning to change! And if you're hungry for more info, there's always the internet!

THERAPY: HABIT MAKING AND BREAKING

Written by Bekah Cone and Designed by Diane Yu

When waking up each day felt daunting, I began therapy. My daily routine fluctuated, but consisted of habits I knew that I wanted to change. I stayed in bed, ate too much or not at all, kept myself isolated and found myself quickly spiraling downwards, but I am a creature of habit. Regardless of how damaging a habitual action I have is, it is comfortable. It is something I continue to do, not because I want to, but because it is familiar. To begin new habits was one of the intimidating tasks that I felt paralyzed with each morning, but my therapist broke it down in a way that helped me save myself from the self-destruction that I was engaging in.

I started with my own goal of making it to therapy each week. This became routine, so my therapist introduced something new. The next task was to try to get out of my apartment each day. These tasks may seem simple, but when clinically depressed, managing to do these activities often feels like an accomplishment. I continued to work towards these goals and each day, the weight on my shoulders felt a bit lighter, the tasks became easier and I slowly continued to add new things to my routine. I kept my goals small, but important, and with each small step, I found myself where I am now. Over the past couple of years, I began making sure that I eat three times a day, I go to bed and wake up at the same time nearly every day, I read every night before I go to bed, I get outside at least once every day and I still continue my weekly therapy.

People often ask me how I stick with my “healthy habits” and I make sure to highlight the process. I expected that I would be able to change my habits quickly, but once actions have been ingrained in your brain for years, it takes time to change those habits. I am not perfect. I often fall back into the habits that were destructive for me, but the brain is like a muscle and I continue to train every day. Working through this process and going to therapy every week makes these habits a little easier to continue. The work that I do in therapy to continue building new habits will not end. As each of these actions become truly habitual, I begin working to develop new habits that will benefit me; the current habit I am working on is mindfulness. Many of my habits have been self-destructive, but the work I have done has helped me find comfort and importance in the habits that can promote and support my health and wellbeing.

LIVING BY THE HALF-HOUR

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY SYDNEY KIM

I strongly believe that if you were to look up the phrase “creature of habit” that you would see a picture of my face. Bolded, highlighted, and underlined. My existence rests solely on my ability to rely on instinctual behaviors that lead me through my day-to-day life. My necessity for habits in all aspects of my life takes me all of the way back to my diagnosis with Type 1 Diabetes. I was forced to form life-altering habits when I was 5-years-old: test your blood sugar before breakfast, bolus before you eat, test and decrease your basal before you play tennis, test before you go to bed, test before you get behind the wheel. These little behaviors became ingrained habits, which then became a fixed routine that I have then habitually relied on as second nature over the last 15 years. Depending on these habits in order to stay physically healthy then became the way that I structured the rest of my daily routine. I wake up at the same time each day. I eat dinner at the same time every night. I have the same workout schedule each week. I create daily lists of what I need to accomplish to ensure that I stay on track for my classes. I schedule my days down to every half-hour. I now have a habit of depending on these small habits turned routines in order to guide me. I rely on routine, order, and predictability in order to thrive. And most of the time, this works out for me.

It’s in those moments of unpredictability and uncertainty, however, that I waver. I struggle to function in instances where something steps beyond the lines of my tightly-built schedule. If my routine is disturbed, I feel as though the rest of my day has escaped my control. This could be something small, such as adding a short meeting to my calendar where there was previously a blank space, or meeting someone for dinner at the last minute when I already had my meals planned through the next week. Though my reliance on routine has become a habit that has benefited me in numerous ways, it is in those moments of the unknown where I cease to function. And that can be a problem. For me, there is an idyllic nature to college that doesn’t translate to the real world; syllabi serve as guides for 16 weeks of the year at a time, class schedules dictate availability, and there is certainty as to when a paper is due and when an exam will take place. Planning out my calendar three months in advance has become a crutch for me. Knowing what each week of the school year will bring gives me a sense of comfort and stability. But in transitioning into the world beyond school, things will start to look a little different. A little less transparent. And I know I am going to struggle.

Time will allow me to create new habits, I am sure, but I expect to flounder, quite dramatically, in the span of time it takes to find a new routine. It has happened before, and as a self-described “creature of habit,” I expect it to happen again. There is something reassuring about knowing what is going to occur from one moment to the next; I feel in control and confident. But I also know that having flexibility and being able to adjust and re-adjust is equally important – a new habit, perhaps?

tuesday, january 14th

it is 7:30am, and i am tired

if the city still sleeps, the sun still sleeps, and well, my roommate still sleeps, why must i say goodbye to this sweet, sweet release

it is 7:30am, and i have physical chemistry, and i am tired

my hands sweat and the room is warm and i need to think of an intelligent response for participation points and my hands sweat and the professor might think i don't have the answer and do i have the answer? and are people noticing that i'm sweating? and is the room getting warmer?

it is 7:30am, and i have physical chemistry, and my hands sweat, and i am tired

is it still considered breakfast if you've already been up for 3 hours? avocado and eggs? yogurt or iced coffee? left-over pizza? cereal or oatmeal? does anyone even actually like oatmeal?

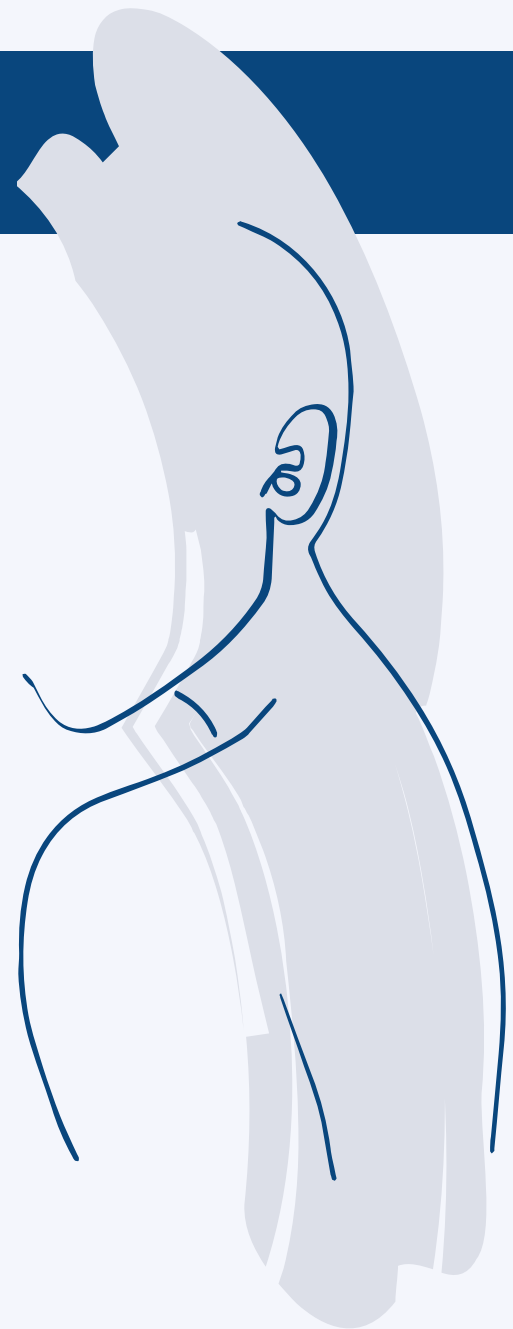
it is 7:30am, and i have physical chemistry, and my hands sweat, and i tried oatmeal today, and i am tired

if i had a dollar for every "i missed you" and "how are you," every loose hug and fake laugh and tight smile, every "we should hang out soon" and "i tried texting you, but i think i lost your number," maybe i wouldn't be so cynical after all

it is 7:30am, and i have physical chemistry, and my hands sweat, and i tried oatmeal today, and we ran into each other on the diag, and i am tired

for someone who knows nothing about economics, i know everything about investing. investing myself, my time, my empathy and my mind to the causes around me. for someone who requires an extraordinary amount of time alone to recharge after socializing, my favorite words are "are you interested in joining our listserv?"

it is 7:30am, and i have physical chemistry, and my hands sweat, and i tried oatmeal today, and we ran into each other on the diag, and on tuesdays i have student org meetings, and i am tired



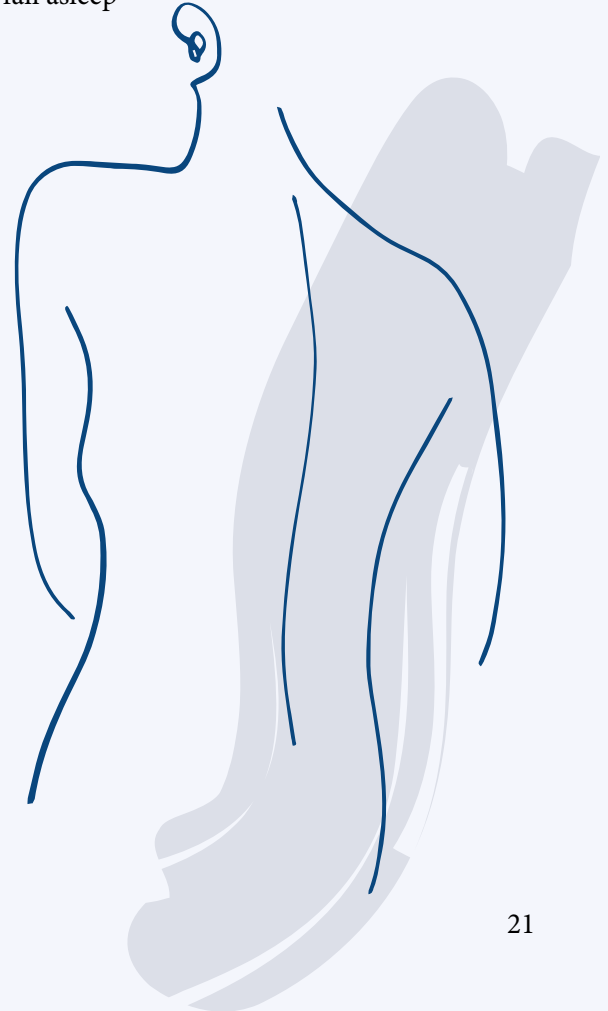
the longer we stare at each other like the stars of an old western classic, i wait for you to morph, to suddenly reveal your pretty printed answers. but instead i change, mind body and soul like the push-over i am. the longer we stare at each other like the stars of an old western classic, my anxiety builds and my heart rate goes up and oh is **that** what a chest pain feels like? is that the caffeine rush or the incompetence? the lack of institutional support or the lack of self-esteem? is it me against you or me against me?

it is 7:30am, and i have physical chemistry, and my hands sweat, and i tried oatmeal today, and we ran into each other on the diag, and on tuesdays i have student org meetings, and it is homework/imposter syndrome hour, and i am tired

if your latest update promised a night mode so effective that it would relieve my straining eyes, why does my heart still bleed? as i scroll and i scroll facebook instagram twitter how do i reconcile the injustices of the world glaring through this harrowing glowing screen where they

leap and take flight, plant seeds and take root. how do i close this app turn off my phone turn away from the people i want to serve while i become smart enough good enough enabled to help?

my strength wanes, but they are strong, and i am tired, and i fall asleep






Learning and Unlearning Toxic Habits

My Journey with Mental Health as a Panhellenic Woman

As a shy, out-of-state freshman longing to find my place on Michigan's campus, it seemed as though participating in sorority recruitment and joining the Panhellenic community was the quickest fix to achieve social stability and happiness during my first semester of college. From an outside perspective, the tight-knit friendships and the structured social aspects of sorority life appeared to be the panacea to my lifelong battle with social anxiety. Joining a sorority, I thought to myself, would be the immediate solution to my imposter syndrome; finding a support system of 200 sorority sisters would be the wave of a magic wand that could take away my internal anguish that I did not belong. Rushing a sorority in my second week as a Michigan student sounded like the easiest way to ameliorate these social anxieties, secure relationships with those who are similar to me, and ensure that my social life fit the expectations I set for myself based on Instagram depictions of the quintessential college experience.

While the sorority has indeed provided me with incredible friendships, social opportunities, and philanthropic endeavors that I anticipated to be part of my Panhellenic experience, I was woefully oblivious to the insalubrious, systematic issues in Greek life that would fuel my own toxic behaviors and deteriorate my mental health. During the beginning of my sorority membership, I fully immersed myself in each social event without question, habitually drinking myself to oblivion and joking with friends over brunch the next morning about our intoxicated adventures from the night before. The normalization of binge-drinking in fraternity and sorority culture is so pervasive and ubiquitous that, at the time, I did not even think twice about the dangers that this behavior would inflict on my mental health. By the time my freshman year ended, I was more anxious, depressed, and alone than I would have ever imagined I could feel within a pledge class of 60 sisters. How was it that my friends, whom I love and respect, were encouraging me to engage in habits that secretly shattered my self-confidence and emotional wellbeing?


Moreover, the intersection of unhealthy behaviors around alcohol and body image are heightened in college and even further underscored as a



woman in the Panhellenic community. While sororities pride themselves on female empowerment, the toxic diet culture and food shaming that occurs when 60 college-aged women reside together in one house is infectious. This is not solely a product of being in sororities; rather, it is the amalgamation of unrealistic beauty norms in our society as a whole and heightened social pressures, such as spring break or date parties, that perpetuate particularly harmful body expectations for sorority women. Before nights out, for example, I remember hearing some Panhellenic sisters declare that they were skipping dinner to look skinnier in their going-out tops or become intoxicated with fewer calories of alcohol. Before I knew it, I was habitually depriving myself too, starving myself for the desperate hope that I would look pretty enough to catch the eyes of That Frat Boy Who I Wanted To Ask To Date Party. Couple my own body insecurities with the fact that a number of women requested “no carbs” and “less dessert” in our chapter house meals, my self-esteem issues were further fueled by the negative body talk of those around me. If a friend who was two sizes smaller than me was complaining about her weight and diet, I believed that it was only natural that I should do the same. Despite the vast omnipresence of this negative body talk, it remained an aspect of Greek life that I noticed was seldom acknowledged in discourse about sorority membership.

While so many women in the Panhellenic community also experience struggles with binge drinking culture and toxic body image, it felt as though I was completely alone because no one else was talking about these issues. That is, until I was recruited to join the Health and Wellness Panhellenic Peer Educators (PPEs). Our organization’s role is to advocate, educate, and de-stigmatize mental and physical health in the Panhellenic community through engaging in conversations with our sorority sisters and serving as a support system to those who are struggling. When I first joined the Health and Wellness PPEs, it was the most validated and empowered I had ever felt as a sorority member, as I was finally given a nonjudgmental platform to share my story and commiserate with other Panhellenic women who experienced similar hardships. The stigma and shame associated with mental health, body image, and substance use among college women are barriers to engaging in open dialogue around these topics, leaving those who struggle to feel absolutely isolated and misunderstood. However, becoming a part of the Panhellenic Peer Educators’ Health and Wellness branch has shown me that the toxic aspects of Greek life can change with the help of pushback from within our community.

Thanks to the support of my fellow Health and Wellness PPEs, I have become confident discussing the unique mental and physical health challenges of sorority women, despite these conversations being uncomfortable and emotionally charged at times. Now, with a deeper understanding of the systems and societal norms that cause the detrimental behaviors of myself and so many



college women, I have shifted my habits to be based in what feels best for my health, and I encourage other Panhellenic sisters to do the same. These new habits that I promote for myself and my fellow Panhellenic members are based in self-compassion, mindfulness, body positivity, and achieving a school-work-life balance. Focusing on praising my body and mind for what they are capable of, rather than punishing them for what they are not, is of utmost importance in achieving success with these habits. Granted, I still suffer from mental illness and my self-esteem is nowhere near perfect, but advocating for improvements to the culture of my campus community, and knowing that this advocacy makes other women feel less alone, truly validates the significance of my work in Health and Wellness PPE.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

FIND US AT:



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Mentality Magazine



mentalitymagazineumich@gmail.com



mentalitymagazine.org

We're always looking for more people to help us!

Writers: All the lovely pieces in these pages were written by students like you! Join Mentality to have your own pieces published on our website or in the next print edition!

Designers: Interested in how these pages are formatted and put together? Join our design team!

Business: We're constantly looking for ways to partner with other orgs on campus and for new events to participate in!

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LSA STUDENT GOVERNMENT
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

M | UNIVERSITY UNIONS

CAMPUS RESOURCES

STUDENT SERVICES

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

3100 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Thurs: 8am - 7pm, Fri: 8am - 5pm
(734) 764-8312

(Press 0 for After Hours Urgent Support)

<https://caps.umich.edu>

Provides free, confidential services for U of M students including: counseling for individuals or couples, workshops and groups for support and changing patterns, Assessment of Substance Abuse Patterns (ASAP), online screening for mental health concerns.

MiTALK ("My Talk")

<https://caps.umich.edu/mitalk>

Offers online screenings for depression and anxiety, skill-building tools, and recorded workshops, lectures and relaxation exercises.

Campus Mind Works

<http://campusmindworks.org>

Provides resources for students who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC)

551 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Fri: 9am - 5pm

Office Phone: (734) 764-7771

24-hour Crisis Line: (734) 936-3333

<https://sapac.umich.edu>

Provides free confidential crisis intervention, advocacy, and support for survivors of sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and stalking.

Spectrum Center

3200 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Fri: 9am - 6pm

(734) 763-4186

<https://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>

Provides a range of education and advocacy services that work to make campus a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQA students and staff. Also offers on-campus HIV rapid testing.

U-M University Health Service (UHS)

207 Fletcher St.

Hours: Mon-Wed: 8am-5pm, Thu: 9am-5pm,
Fri: 8am-4:30pm, Sat: 9am-12pm

(734) 764-8320

www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs

Provides medication and management of common mental health concerns.

U-M Psychological Clinic

500 E. Washington St., Suite 100

(734) 764-3471

<http://mari.umich.edu/psych-clinic/>

Offers assessment, counseling, and treatment for adults in the U-M community, including: anxiety, depression, couples issues, and problems with work and study.

EMPLOYEE SERVICES

U-M Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

1009 Greene St.

(734) 936-8660

Provides short-term counseling and coaching for staff, faculty and their immediate family members.

CAMPUS SAFETY

Division of Public Safety and Security

Emergencies: Dial 9-1-1

Non-emergencies: (734) 763-1131

Tip line: (734) 763-9180

NATIONAL 24-HR HOTLINES

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1 (800) 273-8255

The Trevor Lifeline

Trevor Lifeline: 1 (866) 488-7386

TrevorChat (available 7 days a week 3pm-9pm ET):

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now>

TrevorText (Thursdays and Fridays 4pm-8pm ET):

Text the word "Trevor" to 1 (202) 304-1200

Provides suicide prevention and crisis intervention to LGBTQ young people ages 13-24.

Veterans Crisis Line

Hotline: Call 1 (800) 273-8255 and Press 1

Online chat: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net>

Text: 838255

Connects Veterans in crisis and their loved ones with qualified, Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

U-M HEALTH SYSTEM

Note: Services at the U-M Health System are not covered by students' health service fee.

U-M Depression Center

(734) 936-4400

Dedicated to research, education, and treatment of depressive and bipolar illnesses.

U-M Collegiate Sleep Disorder Clinic

(734) 936-9068

Helps improve your sleep, daytime function and, hopefully, academic performance.

U-M Anxiety Disorders Treatment Clinic

(734) 764-0231

Offers treatment of problematic anxiety and stress.

U-M Ambulatory (Outpatient) Psychiatry Services

1 (800) 525-5188 or (734) 764-0231

Provides comprehensive evaluation and treatment for patients and families affected by mental illness.

UM Psychiatric Emergency Services

Crisis Line: (734) 936-5900 or (734) 996-4747

**University Hospital, 1500 East Medical Center Dr.
Emergency Medicine Reception**

Emergency walk-in consultation and phone service available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

U-M Neuropsychology Clinic

(734) 763-9259

Performs psychological evaluation to differentiate cognitive functioning.

U-M Preventive Cardiology

(734) 998-7400

Offers a "Power of Relaxation" program, as well as nutrition, weight management, exercise, smoking cessation and stress management programs.

**If you or someone
you know struggles
with mental health,
there are ways
to get help. Use
these resources to
find help for yourself
or a loved one.**



"Focusing on praising my body and mind for what they are capable of, rather than punishing them for what they are not, is of utmost importance in achieving success with these habits."

Marissa Levey