



# HEALTHY TRAILBLAZER JOURNAL

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## Joining a team can be healthy

Participating in team sports and other activities can have benefits for your physical, mental, and social health, say some DePaul staff members and recent DePaul graduates in interviews with *Healthy Trailblazer Journal* reporters.

"Getting involved in group activities is good for making friends and staying active," said Ms. Colleen McKenzie, school principal. "It doesn't have to be sports, but you can try different things."

"Being active with someone can make physical activity more enjoyable. It can provide encouragement that keeps you going, and research has found that social support can increase self-efficacy, which is the feeling that you can do something and be successful," said Dr. Laurie Friedman Donze, clinical psychologist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in a 2024 NIH newsletter.

"Having social connections and a sense of belonging are protective factors to help you manage stress and give you a feeling that you are not alone," say experts at the Mayo Clinic Health System, a hospital and research center, on its website.

Ms. McKenzie said she currently participates in pickup basketball games, runs, and walks with friends. She's also in a book club. The principal said

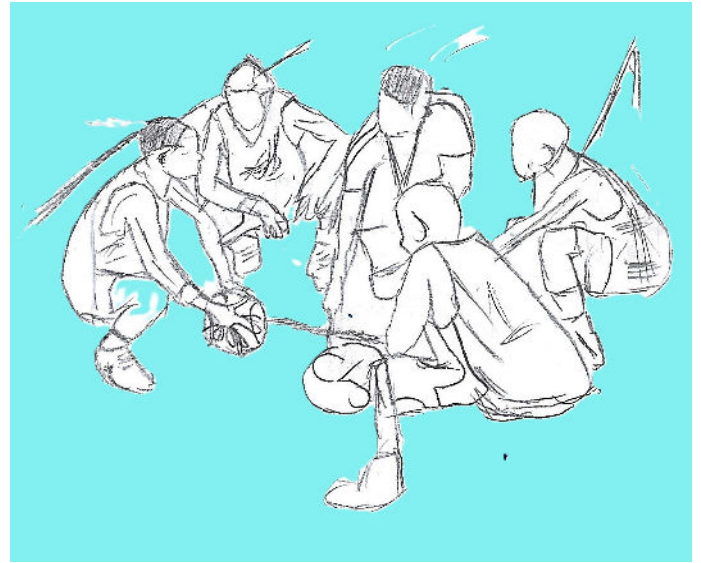


Illustration by a DePaul seventh grader

working out is important to her because she knows exercise benefits your health.

According to Ms. McKenzie, it's important to do different things and not always be on devices, but to

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## What it means to be part of a group

*Editor's note: Two Healthy Trailblazer Journal reporters shared their experiences of joining a team and how it helped them grow.*

I participated in cheer, which I would recommend because it can improve strength, flexibility, and health. The pros of participating in a competitive sport are that you can earn a living from the sport and you can develop physical fitness. The cons of competitive sports are risking physical injury, [feeling] anxious, and costing a lot of money. I would recommend kids participate in a sport because it can give

something to do and build your physical health.

—Jaylaa Ellis

In seventh grade, I was on a cheer team. I wasn't a big fan of working in groups but I decided not to complain about it. While I was there, I started to enjoy it. I made different friends and met a lot of kind people. Group activities can strengthen your ability to cooperate in a team and work with others. They allow you to help understand world dynamics from a different perspective. It can cheer you up and make you happy. It can make you love being around others.

—Arielle Burgess

# Showing gratitude can help you too

Gratitude means thankfulness according to the Merriam Webster dictionary, and it can strengthen relationships, say researchers at University of California San Diego on the school's website.

There are many ways to show gratitude for others: saying thank you, or kind actions like doing a chore, sharing a snack, or helping someone with something. Research shows that practicing gratitude on a regular basis can be good for your health by decreasing anxiety, improving heart health, and improving sleep, say University of California Los Angeles health experts on the UCLA Health website.

Eighth-grade students chose to show appreciation for people at DePaul who have improved their learning experiences and lives by writing thank-you notes. For instance, Peyton Young wrote to her friend: "Thank you for being there even through the difficult times. You always know how to cheer me up, calm me down, and give me good advice. You've seen me at my absolute worst and somehow you still stayed. I appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness."

Arielle Burgess told her friend: "I am so thankful for all of the laughs you have given me throughout this past two years. I love how even when I'm sad you

still manage to put a smile on my face. I love how happy you make me especially when I'm crying. My life has been way better with you in it."

Here are a few letters to DePaul teachers:

Dear Ms. Mears,

Thank you for pushing me to my limits and seeing some potential in me. Having our class strictly doing work helped me prepare for high school. I really appreciate the preparation you are giving us for the future. I saw school as a game but now I see it as a job and grades like a paycheck. Thank you. From playful to serious, you have shown me a new way to work on myself every day. —Xavier Whittington

Dear Mr. Leonard,

I just want to start off by saying thank you for everything—your kindness and encouragement and helping me when I didn't know how to ask. Words can't express how glad I am to have a teacher like you. I could write a ton more, but I just wanted to tell you how much I value everything that you do.

—Jaylaa Ellis

## Find an activity that makes you happy

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be creative and to learn. She said that as a kid, she used to swim and play basketball and soccer. She got into these activities because of the fun of it, and she said she didn't want to miss out on what her friends were doing.

Mrs. Theresa Tiffin, teacher coach, said she was a coach for girls basketball. She started playing at age 7 because her sister got her interested. She said she loves being active and enjoys both basketball and soccer. "Being in sports can help your health overall," Mrs. Tiffin said. "You should do it because you find something that you're passionate about and that makes you happy." She said being in group activities is important for learning more about taking responsibility and sympathy.

Khadafi, a DePaul graduate, currently a student at Mercy Career and Technical School, said you should try out new things when you have the opportunity. He said he tried basketball and now it's his favorite sport. He also plays football, flag football, and runs track. Getting out of your comfort zone and trying new things are important, according to

Khadafi. He said he enjoys the exercise and meeting new people.

Isaiah, another DePaul graduate, also attends Mercy Tech. He said he signed up to play flag football because he likes the connections he makes and the people he's around. He said that putting yourself out there will give you a good high school experience.

—By *Healthy Trailblazer Journal* staff

## We want to hear from you!

**Tell us what you do to help your classmates or neighbors. Send your reflection to Mr. Leonard. It might appear in our next issue!**

*DePaul Healthy Trailblazer Journal*

A publication of The DePaul Catholic School, an Independence Mission School in Philadelphia. Eighth-grade reporters include Jerrell Burgess, Arielle Burgess, James Conley, Jaylaa Ellis, Xavier Whittington, and Peyton Young.

The newspaper's faculty advisor is Mr. Leonard. DePaul's school principal is Ms. McKenzie.

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# Cub Corner

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## Try these activities for your heart

Healthy habits are important for keeping our hearts healthy, cub reporters in Ms. Diana and Ms. Kanopka's classes recently learned.

According to Paul Showers in the children's book *Hear Your Heart*, the heart moves blood through the body.

Because the heart is so important, Kindergarten and first-grade reporters learned that there are many things people can do to keep them healthy.

Experts at KidsHealth.org say that drinking water, eating healthy food, reducing stress, and getting more sleep can help our hearts stay strong and healthy.

Reporters shared their favorite ways to keep their hearts healthy: Going on a walk with a friend. Jumping. Swimming.



Illustration by a cub reporter

Rock climbing. Doing push-ups. Playing soccer. Playing tag with friends. Riding a bike. Playing football. Running.

—By Ms. Diana's and Ms. Kanopka's cub reporters

## Listening to music can lower stress

Ms. Meaney's first-grade cub reporters learned recently that listening to peaceful music is something they can do to help them calm down and lessen their stress. They followed these instructions from Greater Good in Education:

- ♥ Find a quiet place.
- ♥ Check in with yourself and think about how you feel.
- ♥ Put on peaceful music.

- ♥ Listen to music for as long as you're able
- ♥ Check in with yourself and think about how you feel after listening.

Most reporters shared that after listening to the music, they felt calm, peaceful, and even a little sleepy. No one said they felt worse. One reporter said she started the day feeling stressed and tired, but the peaceful music made her feel safe and calm.

# How much sleep do animals need?

Sleep is a time for people's bodies to rest and heal, according to experts KidsHealth.org.

All living things need to rest. Ms. Diana's Kindergarten reporters compared the sleep people need to the amount their favorite animals need.

Experts at KidsHealth say school-aged children need 9 to 12 hours of sleep a night, depending on their age, size, and activity level.

Students were surprised to learn that capybaras only take short naps throughout the day, according to The Sloth Conservation Foundation website. They often sleep in the water.

Reporters also were surprised that all cats—including housecats and lions—need about the same amount of sleep a day, Eric Chudler, a professor at the University of Washington.



Illustrations by a Kindergarten cub reporter

Animal	Daily sleep	Animal	Daily sleep
Lion	14 hours	Pig	8 hours
Dolphin	4 hours	Duck	10 hours
Monkey	17 hours	Dog	10 hours
Elephant	2 hours	Giraffe	4 hours

Source: <https://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/chasleep.html>

## Take a moment to breathe and relax

Stress can make you feel sad, nervous, frustrated, mad, and even give you a stomachache or headache, say experts at KidsHealth.org, a health website for kids and teens.

Ms. Diana's Kindergartener reporters practiced a breathing exercise to reduce stress. When you pay attention to your breathing you can help yourself calm down and relax, according to education professors at Stanford University.

To practice breathing, Cub reporters pretended they were blowing out a candle on a cupcake.\*

- Lace fingers together with your fingers pointing up.
- Hold your fingers in front of your lips.
- Gently inhale and exhale, blowing on your fingers.

Cub reporters drew some pictures of the places where they can practice breathing, which included the park, their bedroom, the library, and DePaul's Peace Room. In the Peace Room, students can sit in a cozy space when they're feeling upset and practice breathing to calm down.

\* Source for cupcake activity: [empoweringeducation.org](http://empoweringeducation.org)