

The Health Puzzle (Alphabetically Arranged)

Athletics

The most common form of exercise. Many enjoy athletics for the competition. Athletics challenge us physically and mentally. It introduces us to a world of diverse people with a common interest.

I was introduced to athletics through Mommy and Me gymnastics at age 2.

Balance

The balance beam used to be my favorite event.

However, as skills got more complex and the beam seemed to get higher, I couldn't enjoy it anymore.

Balance is essential at any stage in life. Maintaining levels of sleep, exercise, nutrition, social activity, and love are just part of the entire puzzle of life. These 26 words are merely 26 pieces to the puzzle of health.

Communication

Commonly regarded as the most important key in maintaining healthy relationships.

There is no teamwork without communication.

Dolan, Steve

The head coach of track and field at UPenn. He coached Madison Holleran in the 2014 season.

Endorphins

When you exercise, your body releases hormones called endorphins that impact

neuron receptors. They make you feel good. They make exercise addicting.

Friends

Friends can motivate you to exercise, eat healthily, and maintain habits. Having an accountability group is one of the best ways to attain your goals and learn from others.

Gratitude

Gratitude allows us to let others know the positive impact they have on our lives. It's a two-way street of positivity.

Happiness

Despite the physiological "feel good" effects, exercise alone does not necessarily lead to happiness. Pressure from coaches, teammates, parents, and yourself can cause stress and anxiety.

Injury

Injury is inevitable in the sports realm. While athletes and trainers can see physical healing, injury also harms us emotionally. My senior basketball season was plagued by chronic injuries. The stress led to severe anxiety and eventual depression.

"Just do it"

People think I'm a drama queen-- "the girl who cried goddamn 'wolf' 3 times a day." When I say that my knee hurts, my coaches say "Just do it." So when I said, "My anxiety is skyrocketing and I'm scared. I can't eat and I'm not ready to play in tonight's game." I got the expected response.

Kate Fagan

Kate Fagan is a writer for ESPN. She dedicated years to uncovering the hidden struggles of Madison Holleran.

Kate saw herself in Maddy's struggle through her athletic journey-- aside from the ultimate end of the trail.

“We have little sympathy for injuries that we can't see and touch [...] But that's where the comparison between the two ends, because with mental illness, an official diagnosis usually doesn't end the stigma.” -Fagan

Limits

Kate Fagan hit her limit when she finally told her basketball coach at the University of Colorado that she wanted-- no, *needed* to quit.

I hit my limit when I realized basketball was more anxiety-inducing than fun for me. I told my trainers and coaches that I needed to quit.

Maddy Holleran hit her limit when she told coach Dollan she needed to quit track.

Know and respect your limits.

Madison “Maddy” Stacy Amelia Holleran

Instagram: @maddyholleran

Madison was a freshman track star at the University of Pennsylvania. From afar, people thought she had it all: stellar grades, multi-accoladed athlete, popularity, beauty... but they forgot genuine happiness. At the age of 19, Maddy took her own life.

Nutrition

An essential part of our health journey. First and foremost, be aware of what you put into

your body. My nutrition teacher often preached, “you are what you eat and you are what you eat eats.”

Eating well can boost your mood and make you feel more energized. 85%+ dark chocolate increases magnesium intake, aids in blood flow from brain to body, and activates your vascular system while making you happy.

Optimism

(n): hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something.

Optimism gives us light in our darkest days. Even when we are burned out, our friends and loved ones are the ones to relight the candle of optimism. Don't let go of hope.

Play

“Play is about an activity that brings joy just for the pure sake of the doing of it.” -Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, *Designing Your Life*.

Play promotes creativity, happiness, energy, and more. In my, Kate, and Maddy's experience, our play activity wasn't play anymore. Set aside time for play.

Questions

1. What do Maddy, Kate, and I all have in common?
2. Do you prioritize mental or physical health? Should you be prioritizing? (you might want to re-read “Balance”)
3. What are your play activities? Did you play today?

Rest

“Rest is for the weak” is false. Sleep is needed to promote neuron connections in the brain, physically recover from exercise, and enhance mood and work performance. Again, know and respect your limits. Know when you need to rest.

Social Life

My followers on Instagram: 1548
The number of close friends I have: < 20

Trust

The greatest, most fulfilling relationships are often built on a foundation of trust. Trust yourself.

Unhealthy

We all have unhealthy habits despite trying to lead a healthy lifestyle. My unhealthy habits include having an irregular sleep schedule, stress eating, and not acknowledging my limits.

Venting

Be sure to have your close friends by your side so you can vent. Having a trusted friend to open your soul to helps us learn more about ourselves than we expect and deepens our relationship.

Water (with lemon)

Lemon water aids digestion. It's my go-to drink in restaurants (it's free), sports, and school.

Xylitol

I chew gum when I get nervous. But I always make sure it has xylitol. According

to my dentists (who are also my parents), xylitol is what makes gum “good for your teeth.”

You

Reflection time!
Where are *you* on *your* health journey?
Where do *you* want to be? What actions are *you* taking to get from point A to B?

Zestful

(adj): characterized by great enthusiasm and energy
I'm often zestful when I'm with my friends and/or exercising. I am eternally grateful for those moments.