



The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times.

'Psychology of Happiness' fosters growth

BY ISABELLE ANTHONY, PICKLE EVILLE, AND ANINA GARVIN

What if happiness isn't just a fleeting emotion, but a skill that can be cultivated through understanding and connection? At Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS), the "Psychology of Happiness" course explores that very question. "Psychology of Happiness" aims to educate students on how to internalize an understanding of psychology so that they can maintain and improve their own well-being. Students taking the class connect with fellow classmates and improve their understanding of what happiness really is, and how to cultivate it within themselves. English department chair Christine Ferrone teaches "Psychology of Happiness," which she has developed over the past four years. The course is inspired, in part, by a popular course on the science of happiness and well-being that is offered at Yale University. Ms. Ferrone hopes that her students come to understand that happiness is more than just an emotion. "We work off of the definition that to be happy is to be fulfilled in your life and with

your life," Ms. Ferrone said. "It's not just about pleasure, it's not just about having fun, and it certainly is not about not having sadness or anger or negative emotions. It's about how to work with those emotions in a way that we can kind of move through them with some grace and come out the other side feeling like we're in a place of equanimity," she continued. Through the class, junior Sydney Bruguiera has had a change of view on the idea of happiness. "Before I thought of happiness as just laughing, smiling, or being in an environment that makes you comfortable. But now I feel like there's a whole lot more to it than just a feeling," she said. Junior Nate Larkin agrees. "I've definitely learned that less is more. I'd say I used to think happiness was more about being successful, but now I'd say happiness for me is, you know, experiences. Like the little things that mean a lot to you," he said. Senior Sawyer Schaefer especially enjoys the movement-based activities that occur in class and are some-



PHOTO BY ANINA GARVIN

Senior Malika Khelalfa and junior Samilly Guimaraes participate in an activity for "Happiness 101."

times used to start the lesson. "We always start out doing some sort of activity that gets us moving. Sometimes just going around a circle, doing

a movement that's significant to us, or that resembles us in some way," she said. Ms. Ferrone urges students to take the strategies

and techniques that they practice during class and apply it to their everyday lives. "I expect them to come in, be open, and be

willing to try the techniques I suggest. They should see how those techniques work for them. Maybe they'll continue to do them, or maybe they'll revisit them later on in life," she said. Sydney also enjoys the inviting atmosphere of the class. "My favorite thing about the class is that it's very engaging. I feel like you're welcome to say anything you want, and no one's there to judge you. Everyone's there supporting you for what you have to say," Sydney said. Ms. Ferrone's goal for the "Psychology of Happiness" course is for students to explore the fundamentals of a satisfying life. She aims to create an environment that encourages students to dig below the typical idea of happiness and find the definition that holds true to them. She said, "I love talking about cultivating awe and wonder in your life because, to me, that's critical to a fulfilling life. It's important to put yourself in situations where you feel connected to something much greater than yourself." **HSV**

Phone-free policy transforms classrooms

BY NATALIE WAMBUI, FINN ROBINSON, AND LULU WHITE

In a move to create a more focused and interactive learning environment, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) has implemented the "Away for the Day" policy, which requires students to lock their phone in a neoprene bag called a Yondr Pouch for the duration of the school day. Early observations suggest that this change fosters stronger face-to-face connections among students and enhances classroom participation. Some students believe that locking away phones actually doesn't increase their social interaction, finding no real change between this year and last. Prior to this year, students were expected to have phones away for class, but were allowed to use them during passing periods and lunch periods. Teachers were expected to collect phones from students at the beginning of class. Now, students store phones fully away from 7:40

to 2:05 pm, when they can unlock their Yondr Pouch at magnets located at various building exits. History teacher Corinne Kurtz shared her perspective on the policy's goals. "I think it's about engaging more with each other and with school," she explained. "It's about not using the phone as a crutch but learning to sit with challenges, something I often emphasize in my classes." Despite initial concerns about student resistance, many teachers, including Ms. Kurtz, reported a surprisingly smooth transition. "I thought there would be more complaints or pushback, but it's been quiet," she said. "The students seem to have adapted quickly, and it feels like phones were never part of the equation." Junior Rayssa Moraes expressed a neutral feeling about the new policy. "I was never one of the reasons we got these Yondr Pouches," she said. "I never used my phone

in class unless it was a study hall and I was using it for a hotspot. I don't feel like having my phone locked away has changed my practices that much." When considering the effectiveness of the new policy, sophomore Hydee Turner said, "It seemed like [the administration's] goal was to get kids to interact more in hallways and before class, and I don't feel like it's made that big of a change with that. The kids who didn't talk to anyone before class or anything still don't, and the kids who do [talk to each other] talked even when they had their phones." Rayssa echoed the idea that "Away for the Day" may not change the social dynamics of high school. "Having my phone or not having my phone doesn't change the fact that I like the people I like and I'm really only going to talk to them," she said. Administrative support person Guinevere Cramer,



PHOTO BY BRADY VUGHT

who interacts with many of the students as they enter and exit the school building, has observed a noticeable shift in student behavior. "It used to be so quiet, with students glued to their phones. Now,

there's energy in the hallways and classrooms," she said. Ms. Cramer believes that the policy is helping students form new friendships and develop more awareness of opportunities to get involved

within the school building. History department chair Ena Thulin agreed. "I think it's a great opportunity for students to practice being present," she said. Although "Away for the Day" is an adjustment for upperclassmen, for many incoming freshmen it is an extension of the phone storage expectations they experienced in middle school. Freshman Griffin Craig attended the Edgartown School and said, "You just have to keep [your phone] in your locker [at the Edgartown School]." Although the pouches were not used at the Edgartown School, the expectations were similar — and the Yondr Pouches are used at other schools on-Island. The "Away For The Day" policy is here to stay for this year, but students can continue to give feedback by talking to their teachers and counselors and by emailing awayfortheday@mvrhs.org. **HSV**