I had logged into the Healthy at Hopkins portal before, but it wasn’t until the Race the Globe steps challenge that I became really interested in exploring more about what the program had to offer. It was so fun to sync my phone and smart watch to track my daily steps and workouts. It became a personal daily challenge — to beat my previous day’s steps and my friends’ steps! My team didn’t win the challenge, but we all had a great time “competing.” Even though that steps challenge has ended, I’m still keeping up with my daily tracking and am looking forward to the next challenge!

In addition to physical workouts, I have also been focusing a lot more on my mental well-being. The pandemic has strained us all — mentally and physically. Self-care has never been more important than it is now. I like to use breathing and mindfulness as part of my self-care and have set my smart watch to prompt me to do these exercises. It’s so easy to just take a minute to do it! I also carve out time during the day for quiet time. I turn off the TV and silence my phone, and just focus on a task, like getting ready or folding laundry.

I do deep-breathing exercises at the same time and try to clear my mind. At night, before I go to bed, I spend a few minutes reflecting on the day. Sometimes I write in my journal or make a “to do” list for the next day. While I don’t write in my journal every day, I do make notes regularly about things I am grateful for. Losing my dad two years ago reminded me to be thankful for even the smallest moments.

The pandemic has definitely put a crimp in my usual social practices. FaceTime and Zoom are still not my favorite tools, but I will take them over not seeing friends and family! I’ve always enjoyed sending cards and letters in the mail, but I really ramped up my sending during the past year. Birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and even “just because” were some of the occasions I celebrated via snail mail. Who doesn’t like getting something other than bills and junk in their mailbox? Doing these small gestures helps me feel good too!