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Stress on College Students

There are many myths about college life. Many people say that things like, “college is easier” and “there is more free time,” but these statements are simply not true. However, people do not realize that until they get to college, and the stress can quickly start to pile on as one starts the transition from high school to college. Most college students feel overwhelmed, especially in their first semester. However, there are few students who actually seek professional help for their stress. There are many reasons why most do not, such as they fear embarrassment and humiliation from friends or because they simply do not see it as a problem. However, college students need to realize that stress is a serious mental health issue that can not be ignored and that if left untreated, could cause problems such as a decline in school performance, strains in relationships, and health issues.

Stress can be detrimental to one's performance in school. Mind Alive CEO Dave Siever expresses that college students are required to learn an unreasonable amount of information in a short amount of time (Siever 115). Many people think that college students have more free time than they did in high school, and thus, they have more time to relax. Although it is true that some college students do have more free time, most of that time is generally spent doing homework and studying for tests and exams. Moreover, the average school year in college is slightly shorter than it is in high school, which means that there is a shorter amount of time to learn the information being presented in class. This is an adjustment that is especially hard for freshmen, as they are not yet used to the fast pace of college. Not only this, but there are usually not as many tests in a course in college as in high school. There are some college courses that only have four or five tests in the entire course. With a fewer amount of tests, this means that each test must cover a substantial amount of information. Because of these reasons, many college students are not able to keep up with the workload, which can result in a great amount of stress. Also, because the source of stress is constant, it can start to pile up and start affecting its victim's grades. Furthermore, if one's grades start to slip, then he or she can become even more stressed

because they are not living up to their expectations in college. This can form a chain reaction, which can then lead to many possible outcomes such as someone losing their scholarship or having to drop out of college. Siever also states that stress can make it more difficult for someone to retrieve information from their memory. A research team in 2006 at the University of Amsterdam showed that a stress hormone called cortisol is released during a stressful event and can change the memory circuits in the brain so that only the stressful event is focused on and remembered (Siever 117). Therefore, if students feel stressed while they are studying, then they will only be able to focus on how stressful studying is and not on the information that is actually being studying. This can cause many problems for students because if they feel stressed while studying and then take a test the next day, then they will not be able to retrieve the information they studied because their brains only remember the stressful event of studying. So, even if one does study, that does not fully guarantee that he or she will perform well on a test because of stress. This could possibly result in a student overcompensating for the next test and cramming as much information as they can into a study session. This can add pressure to students, especially when keeping in mind that they have other classes to focus on and that they must

manage their time efficiently so that they do not get caught up in their work. Moreover, that stress will most likely carry on into their studying again because they assume that they are just not studying enough, causing a cycle.

Stress can also have negative effects on college students relationships with friends, families, and partners. Psychologists David Putwain, Kevin Woods, and Wendy Symes found that the pressure some parents put on their college kids causes them to feel unfruitful (Putwain et al. 141). Many college students feel pressure not only from the demands of college but also from their family. Some can agree that they want to make their parents proud and possibly even provide for them in the future, and because of this, there is already an underlying source of pressure to succeed. More stress can be added especially if one has strict parents who emphasize the importance of grades. If one is not performing as well as he should be in school and his grades start to slip, his parents might give him backlash for it. Because of this, the student can feel trapped; he might feel as though his own family does not have an unconditional positive regard for him. Many students go to their family whenever they have social or academic issues, but if their parents put pressure on them, then they might feel like they do not have an outlet,

even though there are mental health resources available on every college campus. Additionally, stress impacts friendships as well as romantic relationships. It can change people's moods rapidly, and if one is stressed from school and their partner or friend is being persistent or annoying, then it could cause them to lash out on them and ultimately ruin the relationship between the two. Even if the relationship is not initially ruined, however, fights will still have at least some negative impacts on both persons. As a result, this can cause the relationship to evolve into something toxic. Not only do toxic relationships not last but they can also take over a person's mind and cause him to expend his energy on fixing the relationship rather than his schooling.

Lastly, stress can have effects on one's overall mental and physical health. Psychologists Saleh, Camart, Sbeira, and Romo state, "college students are particularly vulnerable to stress and present high levels of stress. They are prone to stress-related issues such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, consumption of psychoactive substances, and sleep disorders" (Saleh et al. 2). Long-term stress can eventually lead to mental disorders such as anxiety and depression, but can also have physical effects on the body. For example, many college students deal with their stress

by over or under eating. Numerous people eat to feel happier and thus will tend to eat more during stressful periods. Likewise, others can become so stressed that they completely forget about food and not eat enough. In both scenarios, the body is not obtaining the correct amount of calories and nutrients. Additionally, countless college students are sleep-deprived because of their stress. For some, they will stay up until one or two in the morning, sometimes staying up all night to finish an assignment or paper. This is especially apparent in students who have things on top of school, such as work or sporting activities. Continuous loss of sleep could then result in headaches, tiredness, or illnesses such as influenza. However, one of the biggest “solutions” to stress in college students around many college campuses are drugs, the most prevalent being alcohol. College students ages range from the late teens to mid-adulthood. Because of this, many are legally allowed to drink and will indefinitely do so. Heavy drinking has obvious health risks such as deterioration of the liver, but it can also lead to one becoming dependent on alcohol, which can make it harder for that person to quit drinking.

In all, stress can have negative effects on college students both mentally and physically. It can worsen their grades, relationships, and overall health. However, there are many options to

handle stress around college campuses. Firstly, there are counseling services available at every college campus for students to talk about issues such as stress and mental health and how it is affecting their lives. The counselors at these institutions are specially trained for topics including stress and will help every student in any way they can. The first step is to make an appointment or just drop by, and from there, a counselor can help come up with ways for dealing with one's stress effectively. If one does not feel comfortable doing this, however, there are many ways for the individual to at least reduce stress, including eating healthy, sleeping for at least six hours each night, and exercising. Students could also try joining a club that they are interested in at their college campus, therefore using that club as an outlet to relax. Stress can be hard to deal with, but once a student starts seeking help, it will only get easier from there, and in time, the student will be able to overcome their stress and move on to succeed in their goals.

Works Cited

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