

Stress should not control one's life



Hannah Douglas

They scuttle around with heavy bookbags, constantly fiddling with their phones and anxiously awaiting the next moment as if their lives depend on it. Within this busy beehive is what many call the "typical Truman student." It's this tense, Type A personality mindset of a student that I find most concerning.

When it comes to being busy, I have been there and back again. But exams will come and exams will go. Job positions will open and close like they always have and organizations always will need new members. So, is all this stress really worth it?

Allowing negative stress to run your life is like announcing to yourself and your neighbor you'll be running on autopilot and won't be playing nice with others. This negative stress not only shapes our own lives, but affects others in the surrounding environment. And I am sick and tired of seeing everyone so sick and tired.

If a student stays up all night writing a paper because they couldn't find enough time the day before, that next-day fatigue quickly becomes not only the student's problem, but the problem of everyone else who encounters them post all-nighter. I know there's this notion that everyone in college is supposed to have this sleepless experience at least once during their student career, but I think this is disrespectful. Not only are we encouraging this stress-laden culture, but we also are asking for poor-quality work.

It's not just students who must learn to manage their stress either. I know those both in and out of college tend to put too much on their plates. Difficulties with finances, family and the like arise from the woodwork for those of all ages. Still, running on auto-pilot all the time is not only hazardous to a person's health, it eventually ends badly. We can't allow ourselves to be superheroes every day. Relationships can be super and eventually a person can burn out.

It isn't all personal stress I'm talking about either. Negative stress can be environmental as well. New advances in technology have created a culture where we are able to be reached any given moment of any given day. It's up to us to decide if this mobile mayhem is something we want to make a part of our lives — we can't allow technology to become our decision-maker.

In this great nation, we put great pressures on ourselves, partly because the American psyche reminds us to always strive for the bigger and better. Being driven is fine to some extent, as long as the same rules of mind over matter still apply.

This era is an excellent time for us to learn a little stress management, especially for college students. If you can't handle your workload now, what makes you confident you'll be able to perform a balancing act when you're out in the "real world?"

Truman offers a course on the topic, HLTH 160: Essentials of Stress Management, which I took during winter interim. I thought the course was an excellent week long excursion looking at one of the most important and relevant issues impacting our current society — stress. I only hope more students will look into it and place more emphasis on it in the future.

One major theme I acquired from this course is just how crucial it is to live in the moment. Figuring out a way to transition your thoughts from the future to the present can set you free.

So, if you're reading this, take a breath. A level head and positive attitude are essential for a better living and working environment. There really is no need to remain yet another "typical Truman student."

Hannah Douglas is a senior Communication major from Springfield, Ill.

Organizations actively urge safe sex, not just raise awareness



“...this week, organizations are giving away free condoms and free tests, making it possible to use knowledge for the better.”



Anna Meier

Many of us think this week is all but ruined after having started off with what some would call a worthless holiday — Valentine's Day, of course — but that doesn't have to be the case. Some campus organizations made it a week of opportunities for self-love and healthy choices. That in itself is something to celebrate.

The Lifeline Pregnancy Help Clinic, located approximately one mile from campus, is coming to the Student Union Building tomorrow and every Friday this month to give out free pregnancy tests and information about the clinic. The clinic mainly is focused on making moms healthy and well-informed about their pregnancies.

Additionally, this week is the Women's Resource Center's "V-Week." The organization has set up a number of informational workshops, including one centered around self-love. At the end of the week the WRC will be putting on "The Vagina Monologues," which judging

by last year's performance, will be both educational and moving. Even more, Delta Theta Sigma and the University Counseling Services are hosting an event geared toward accepting our bodies and creating a healthy self-image. Lastly, the Nursing Student Association is doing free HIV, gonorrhea and chlamydia testing in the SUB today.

It's easy for many of us, especially because we often have a lot on our plates academically, to sign up for a couple of organizations at the activities fair, get put on an e-mail list, go to one meeting and slap it on a résumé. It doesn't actually mean anything to us, and the organization certainly is not benefiting from having someone that never shows up or puts in the effort.

I'm not letting myself off the hook here. I've joined clubs only to realize that it wasn't for me, and yet somehow I continue to get weekly e-mails of their minutes. However, I don't think the individual organizational slacker, such as myself, should be totally to blame here. I've been to a couple of organizations' meetings time after time only to hear the same thing every week. "Where should we have this week's potluck?" "Let's make posters and pass out fliers in the SUB." "Let's have a penny war this week on campus." Sure, nitty-gritty business has to be done, but sometimes these groups don't fulfill my urge to actually do something.

That mostly is why I'm so impressed with the organizations putting on events this week. For the most part, these

organizations aren't receiving anything from the services being provided to the rest of the student body, which is really refreshing in the midst of what seems like never-ending fundraising events. Again, I understand fundraising is necessary, but so is giving back to the community who helped raise funds.

Another thing that I like about this week is it is giving students a chance to help themselves. It's so easy to slip into the habit of just raising awareness. Letting people know about a cause is a positive thing to do. However, at some point, the groups discussing the cause need to have some way for people to actually help, otherwise the message tends to get lost after a while. For instance, groups have been talking about the importance of having safe sex and being tested for sexually transmitted infections. This week, organizations are giving away free condoms and free pregnancy tests, making it possible to use that knowledge for the better.

It's always good to see that student organizations are making it possible for us to be healthier, better-informed people and this week there's no denying it. The groups hosting events this week and every week are doing beneficial work, and I'd just like to raise a little awareness about that.

Anna Meier is a senior English major from Kansas City, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

How do you cope with stress?



"Listening to music will usually help to calm me down."

Mariah Richard
freshman



"I try to stay ahead of things and also get enough sleep."

Alyssa Persons
junior



"I'm usually not good with coping with stress so I have lots of long hours and no breaks."

Ben Hasse
junior



"I drink lots of coffee and pray. Taking things to God helps me."

Haley Stroup
freshman

U.S. must stop Cuban embargo despite Castro regime



Connor Riley

It's been more than 20 years since the Berlin Wall fell, 20 years since the Soviet Union collapsed like a house of cards and 20 years since the most potentially destructive international rivalry in history suddenly was forgotten. All misdeeds have been forgiven and new friendships constructed.

Most people think the Cold War ended along with the collapse of

the concrete and barbed wire of the Berlin Wall, but U.S. policy makers have not yet seen fit to end their war against one of the most despised men in America — Fidel Castro. Castro has formally been in power in Cuba for 52 years as of yesterday.

Almost all of those 52 years have been spent in conflict with the United States. Despite the end of the Cold War, relations with Cuba have not been restored like with Russia because of the wound Castro inflicted upon American pride. He refused to be ordered around by American officials — He nationalized industries controlled by U.S. corporations and successfully resisted the U.S., despite the fact that Cuba is only 90 miles away and roughly the size of Tennessee.

Because of Castro's grievous offenses against American egoism, Cuba has been under embargo from the United States since October

1960, and some might say that it's because he's a dictator or a communist, but Castro was just a man that couldn't be bought. In reality, the U.S. has a strong and time-honored tradition of supporting dictators in underdeveloped countries like Cuba, Argentina, Chile and, until recently, Egypt, so the notion that America despises non-democratic regimes is not a logical argument for hostility toward Cuba.

Not only have we supported dictators and mass murderers in the past, but today we regularly do business with countries that have been caught stealing from us and spying on us. Despite our supposed desire to spread democracy and justice, we deal with nations like communist China that run rampant with human rights violations.

Furthermore, none of our close allies such as Britain, France or Canada have imposed trade restric-

tions on Cuba even though they are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In fact, they are more like Cuba than the U.S. in many ways, particularly regarding social programs like universal health care. We have overlooked these very fundamental differences with our allies, so why not with Cuba? It's very simple, really.

No one is willing to forgive Castro's Cuba because it would be political suicide to support such a notion. This is true particularly for President Barack Obama because he repeatedly has been accused of being a dedicated communist/jihadist/Nazi. If Obama were to suggest opening talks with the Castro government, he would receive even less cooperation from the remaining Cold Warriors and the Neo-Conservatives than he already does.

Hopefully, Obama can overlook the severe political backlash and

do what many of his predecessors should have done long ago because it is time to end the embargo with Cuba. It is time to make amends and make up for the one of the biggest blunders in the history of U.S. foreign policy. America and Cuba could have a wonderful symbiotic relationship if only our policy-makers could swallow their pride and forget Castro's insult to U.S. regional dominance.

If we want to prove ourselves benevolent and shed the mantle of the world's biggest bully, now is the time. This is the 21st century and America needs to grow up, not look upon Cuba as if Castro stole our lunch money in the fifth grade. After all, I could use a good cigar.

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