

By Kaitlyn Zwerling

**“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.”**

**-Louis Holtz**

**“According to the 2015 National College Health Assessment, 30% of students reported that stress had negatively affected their academic performance within the past year, and over 85% had felt overwhelmed by everything they had to do at some point within the past year”- Megan Reed**

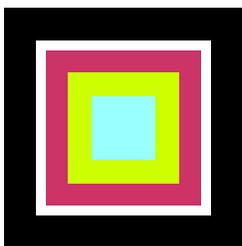


Photo by Kaitlyn Zwerling

For a freshman in college, stress is the norm: we are adjusting to living on our own in a foreign environment away from the comforts of home, while acclimating to a different workload and teaching style of teachers, midterms, and more. That’s enough to give someone a major headache, am I right? “According to the 2015 National College Health Assessment, 30% of students reported that stress had negatively affected their academic performance within the past year, and over 85% had felt overwhelmed by everything they had to do at some point within the past year” (Reed).

Stress and anxiety are all too common for me, and those who know me personally know that I am a perfectionist at heart in almost every aspect of my life. Balancing classes, homework, clubs and activities is enough to make anyone overwhelmed. The way my mind is wired, everything has to be planned in advance, WAY in advance. We all experience stress daily, but there are steps we can take, along with a variety of outlets and resources at Loyola such as the Counseling Center that can help reduce stress and anxiety.

**“The best thing about Loyola is the sense of community on campus... everyone is incredibly loving and supportive.”**



As soon as I arrived at Loyola, and took my first steps on campus, the sun was shining, and the chatter of students puttering around the quad instantly made me feel right at home. The best thing about Loyola is the sense of community on campus; between the students, professors, staff, and administrators, everyone is incredibly loving and supportive. But, before I realized this, and having grown up in a small, tight-knit community, I was apprehensive about living away from home in an unfamiliar environment full of unknowns. Everything was different—the food, the people, and the living accommodations.

“Counseling Center.” *Mission—Counseling Center—Loyola University Maryland.* Web. 02 Mar. 2017

Reed, Megan. “Stress in College Experts Provide Tips to Cope.” *USA Today.* Gannett Satellite Information Network, 29 Oct. 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2017.

Emily Driscoll explains that going off to college involves significant adjustments to your daily routine, and that we are expected to be more independent and self-sufficient: “A lot of people are going away to college, so they’re moving away from their social support system. They have a lot of new things they have to navigate, from getting around campus, to choosing classes, and choosing careers” (qtd. in Reed).

**“Our mission is inspired by the core values of our Jesuit university to encourage life-long learning, development of the whole person, self-reflection, and spiritual development in a diverse and changing world”- LUM Counseling Center**

Striking a balance between school and personal life takes discipline and strong independence skills that not every student is equipped with upon entering college. When I arrived at Loyola, I immediately found myself growing increasingly anxious and uneasy. Thankfully, I was directed to the Counseling Center for the first time by my evergreen, Anna, who assured me it was a safe place for discussion and support regarding stress and anxiety.



When I walked into the Counseling Center for the first time, I was immediately taken aback by the warm and welcoming atmosphere created by the counselors, who eased all my discomfort and alleviated my stress. I found that seeking counseling was a sign of strength; I was taking matters into my own hands, and utilizing the free services of the Counseling Center for self-empowerment and self-care, especially during the difficult transition into college life.

Part of the Counseling Center's mission is to support student growth and development through psychological services and programs to help Loyola students maintain their emotional well-being and succeed academically and personally. Their goal is to promote a healthy and welcoming environment for Loyola students through relationship building and educational support.

The Counseling Center gave me a safe environment to reflect on everything I was feeling. What are my stressors? What kinds of emotions do I feel when I'm stressed? What types of things should I do when I'm overwhelmed? All of this was racing through my head at a million light years. Through the Counseling Center, however, I learned various stress management techniques to help remove my stressors by altering the way I react to stressful situations and teaching me alternative ways of coping. Dr. Gregory Jantz says to relieve stress, some people may only need something as simple as removing themselves out of their normal setting (qtd. in Reed).

**“Maybe there’s too much stimuli and you have to remove yourself from distraction. Use a different environment to help calm you down”- Dr. Gregory Jantz**

College can be an exciting time with many wonderful experiences meeting new friends and exploring a new city, but it can also be a time of great difficulty. It's important to understand and realize that stress is a normal aspect of the transition process. Although it may seem challenging for us to reinforce the good things in our lives, recognizing the abundance of resources and support outlets we have on campus is essential. When the going gets tough, use it as fuel to power through that bad day; happiness is right around the corner. Maintain a positive attitude, laugh when you can, and share those experiences with others.

