

A QUICK FIX

By Kira Mitchell

It's that point in the semester—we are sleep deprived, anxious, and stressed. Our days become consumed by cramming and jamming concepts into our minds, constructing heaping mounds of flash cards, and pulling all-nighters. We "hydrate" our now exhausted, zombie-like bodies with lattes, frappes, iced coffees, espressos, and any form of caffeine we can concoct while munching on a granola bar every few hours. Many of us college students feel it's the only way to make it through finals week on a college campus. We hope that we don't come down with a cold anytime remotely close to finals. We pray our bodies will be able to handle the massive amounts of stress we have put them under. We look for a quick fix. But, these quick fixes don't work. It's that simple. Without a balanced diet, we cannot handle the amount of

stress put on our bodies throughout the semester.

Cura personalis, or caring for the whole individual, is the most effective way to keep our bodies healthy and stress free. Preserving a balanced mind, body, and spirit must be an essential priority towards the end of the semester to help decrease stress and anxiety while increasing motivation for the overall benefit of our whole being, and our final grades. While *cura personalis* embodies the whole individual, we commonly overlook the component of consuming healthy, long-lasting, energy-rich foods directed towards the physical body and mind aspect. During a stressful time, such as finals week, it is important to think about how the decisions to eat well will affect the entirety of your being. To obtain a healthy

mind, we must feed our bodies nourishing foods to first benefit our bodies.

Around the end of the semester, there is a strong reliance on greasy, insufficient takeout, and caffeine. Easy access to readily available and cheap options appeal to our dried-out bank accounts. Anything we can get our hands on for quick bursts of energy, or to temporally fill our nagging stomachs, will usually do just that for the time being. Jasvinder Chawla, MD, from Medscape mentions in her article, "Neurologic Effects of Caffeine": "[t]he most notable behavioral effects of caffeine occur after consumption of low-to-moderate doses (50-300 mg) and include increased alertness, energy, and ability to concentrate." These benefits and our cheap easy access to caffeinated drinks on campus are a plus. But what happens when we form a reliance on caffeine?

Too much of almost anything will have negative effects on the body. As college students, we rely heavily on coffee throughout varying points in the semester—mostly when it comes to pulling all-nighters for preparation for big exams. We become addicted to the short energy bursts it provides, and we tell our bodies we need a caffeinated beverage any-

time we feel a bit sluggish. Richard P. Millman discusses in *Pediatrics*: "[caffeine] may lead to insomnia or subconscious sleep disruption and subsequent daytime drowsiness, which in turn may lead to an increased need for caffeine the next day." Chawla provides explanation to some of these conse-

quences outlined by Millman, "...higher doses induce negative effects such as anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, and tachycardia." Turning to caffeine every occasion you feel as if you need a speedy pick-me-up will get you addicted and create a reliance. This quick fix adds up and it won't suffice.



"HERBAL TEAS
LIKE MINT,
CHAMOMILE,
GINSENG OR
LEMON CALM
YOU NERVES
AND ARE
BENEFICIAL FOR
YOUR HEALTH."
- CARINA LEE

During finals week, it's so easy for us to turn to a large french fry and an energy drink. We rely on this quick fix to "keep us going." Except for the fact that greasy food causes a lack of energy, an inability to stay focused, and a drowsy feeling. Then, drinking an energy drink or a coffee to receive a burst of energy to compensate for the negative repercussions of greasy food will only backfire and leave you feeling more drowsy and unfocused later. Many people falsely believe that consuming foods and drinks that have no real healthy value but are highly caffeinated will increase your alertness and "oomph." However, these

so-called "benefits" are only temporary and will leave you with the reverse effect throughout the day. Furnishing our bodies with only caffeine, fatty, and sugary foods does not provide any sort of benefit and nutrients to the whole individual. Presenting our bodies with the proper foods will not only increase energy, but also our overall happiness.



Providing our bodies with foods rich in vitamins and minerals like potassium, vitamin B, omega-3 fats, proteins, calcium, vitamin D, zinc, and antioxidants gives the body an increase in energy and mood; each nutrient has its own function to help you become a happier individual. According to Spoon University, avocado, tea, fatty fish,

milk, yogurt, nuts, and dark chocolate are seven foods that contain these nutrients and should be included in your pre-final diet. Of these foods, each contain stress-relieving nutrients that contribute to the overall benefits of eating right. For instance, "Herbal teas like mint, chamomile, ginseng or lemon calm your nerves and are beneficial for your

health. Sip on a warm cup of tea during those late-night study sessions, which will also help your brain wind down before crawling into bed" (Lee). Herbal teas allow you to concentrate, stay up, and retain information while contributing to a more natural source of energy that does not leave you feeling shaky while taking notes and

reviewing concepts. Also, during your studying, treat yourself to a couple pieces of dark chocolate.



"The flavanoids and antioxidants in dark chocolate have been shown to lower stress hormone levels and improve your mood. In addition, cacao contains just a bit of caffeine to boost your energy levels and help you power through the rest of your studying" (Lee). Utilizing "snack time" by consuming foods with higher health benefits like nuts, yogurt and dark chocolate will impact the outcome of studying in a positive way. This combination of decreased stress and increased mood from dark chocolate are connected to the increase in energy the antioxidants have provided you. Having energy increases happiness. An increase in energy leads to a more positive mood which then increases motivation. Finding the right source of energy for your body is a major key. Digesting unhealthy foods that make you feel slothful contributes to tricking yourself into thinking you need coffee to get things done. Then, by drinking too much coffee, your body is sent a short jolt of energy that leads to a shaky feeling and then a crash. When looking for something to increase your energy, make sure it is a healthy choice.

Chawla, Jasvinder. *Neurologic Effects of Caffeine*. Medscape, 2015. Web. Accessed 5 Dec. 2016.

Lee, Carina. *7 Health Foods to Help You Power Through Finals Week*. Spoon University, 2016. Web. Accessed 5 Nov. 2016.

Millman, Richard P. "Excessive sleepiness in adolescents and young adults: causes, consequences, and treatment strategies." *Pediatrics* 115.6 (2005): 1774-1786. Web. Accessed 5 Dec. 2016.

