



View of Loyola's "bridge" from the top of the chapel

## Thriving in College: The Power of Boundaries, Balance, and Self Care By Brooke Roberts

As you embark on your college journey at Loyola, you may feel pressure to fill every moment with new experiences, friendships, and responsibilities. But as fulfilling as college life can be, it's easy to get overwhelmed, especially if you neglect to set boundaries and prioritize your well-being. Learning to say "no," managing your time, and balancing academics with social life are essential skills for thriving in college. Here are some insights and practical tips to help you navigate these different intricate facets of your new chapter.

"MOTIVATION IS WHAT GETS YOU STARTED— HABIT IS WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING."  
-REGAN DAILY '28

### The Power of Saying "No"

College is filled with opportunities, from clubs and classes to social gatherings and leadership roles. But as exciting as these can be, taking on too much can lead to burnout and stress. Saying "no" might feel uncomfortable, especially in a new environment where you want to make connections and be part of the community. However, setting boundaries and respectfully declining when overwhelmed is empowering and essential. By saying "no" to extra commitments, you create space to focus on what truly matters to you and maintain your mental health.

When you feel the need to say "no," try these approaches:

- **Be Honest but Kind:** Explain that you're focused on other priorities right now. For instance, say, "I'd love to help, but I need to prioritize my coursework this semester."
- **Offer an Alternative:** If possible, suggest another time or a smaller role you can take on. This way, you're showing willingness while respecting your limits.

Prioritizing yourself and recognizing when to say "no" can enhance your productivity, improve mental health, and leave you more energized for the activities you truly enjoy.

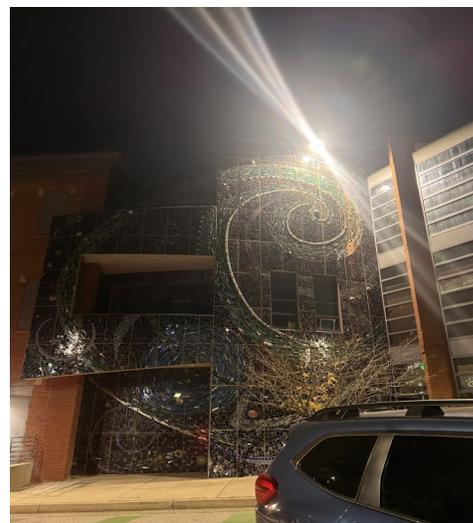


Fall foliage along the path to Maryland Hall.

### Avoiding Burnout in College

With a full schedule of classes, assignments, social events, and perhaps a part-time job, burnout can creep in quickly. Burnout often shows up as physical and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and decreased academ-

ic performance. To prevent burnout, it's essential to manage your responsibilities while taking regular breaks to recharge. I spoke to DAS Testing Coordinator, Taylor Thornton, about how she has experienced burnout, and what she had to say was: "I was juggling a lot of hats and different roles and pushing myself to my actual limit. It actually affected every area of my life, not eating, not sleeping, it was hard for me to initiate tasks, and by the end of it I felt like a shell of a person." When I asked how she overcame those struggles she told me, "I think it's [...] important to give yourself breaks and really try to find the balance of academics and a social life, but prioritizing the things that actually bring you joy because college isn't meant to be just school all the time."



Side of American Visionary Art Museum

Time management isn't just about productivity; it's a way to make time for yourself. When feeling that extreme burnout, it is definitely time to reevaluate your time management skills. When you plan your schedule mindfully, you're actively caring for your well-being. Good time management allows you to create moments for self-reflection, personal interests, and rest. I have personally struggled tremendously with managing my time, so I asked another first-year her thoughts on the matter. What Regan Daily had to say was, "Prioritize. I have found that trying to get all my work done in one night is just not feasible so learning to prioritize my assignments accordingly has been a game changer for me." Staying up all hours of the night and trying to "cram" all the information you need to know for your exams, or finishing all 7 assignments you saved for the last minute, just wears you down, making it harder and harder each day. Instead, try some of these tips to help you manage not only your time but also your stress. Effective time management is the foundation for a balanced and fulfilling college experience, as it creates room for growth and self-discovery.

"STRIVE NOT TO  
BE A SUCCESS  
BUT RATHER TO  
BE OF VALUE."  
-ALBERT  
EINSTEIN

To help you avoid burnout and increase time management capabilities, consider the following strategies:

- **Set Realistic Goals:** Break down large tasks into smaller, manageable steps, and avoid overloading your schedule.
- **Time-Blocking:** Set specific blocks of time for tasks, including study, relaxation, and personal pursuits. This structure helps prevent procrastination and reduces stress.
- **Prioritize Tasks:** Identify which tasks need immediate attention and which can wait. Prioritizing reduces the feeling of being overwhelmed.
- **Prioritize Breaks:** Incorporate short breaks between study sessions to keep your mind fresh and avoid pro-



Northern Lights view from Hopkins Court

longed stress, even as little as 10–15 minutes can help just to break up your time.

- **Balance Your Schedule:** Make sure your week includes time for study, socializing, exercise, and rest. Maintaining this balance is key to long-term success and well-being.
- **Campus Resources:** At Loyola, “*Cura Personalis*” is one of our core values. That means specifically caring for the “whole person.” Mind, Body, and Soul. So, to be able to do that, Here at Loyola, we offer some incredible campus resources, free, at your complete disposal whenever you need them. Some of those include: [The Counseling Center](#), [Disability and Accessibility Services](#), [The Study](#), [The Writing Center](#), [Campus Ministry](#), [The Thrive Center for Student Success](#), [Academic Advising and Support Center](#), and for those of you that are athletes, Loyola has you covered as well with [Student-Athlete Support Services](#). Whoever you are and whatever you need help with, someone here at Loyola is going to be there for you.



Loyola Chapel  
Campus ministry

Recognizing the signs of burnout and adjusting your habits early on will help you avoid feeling drained and overwhelmed, allowing you to stay focused and engaged.

## Balancing Social Life with Academics

College is a time for new friendships and relationships, but balancing social life with academics can be challenging. Maintaining healthy relationships without sacrificing academic goals requires strong time management and boundary-setting skills. I spoke to current Freshman Daniella Clarke about how she can balance the school-life predicament and she said, “To manage, I made sure to set aside time for myself during blocked periods to focus on work, and then I’d hang out with friends afterwards.”

Here are a few of the things that I have learned that can help:

- **Prioritize Time for Academics:** Allocate dedicated study hours, and communicate your boundaries to friends. They’ll understand if you explain your need to focus.
- **Recognize Supportive Relationships:** Spend time with friends who understand and encourage your goals. Relationships that



Downtown Baltimore Graffiti on  
Bridge in traffic

uplift you are a key source of motivation and balance.

- **Set Boundaries for Social Events:** If friends invite you out when you have academic responsibilities, respectfully decline or propose an alternative plan. Balancing your commitments will help you enjoy a fulfilling social life without compromising your priorities.

By balancing social life and academics, you create a space where friendships enrich your experience without distracting from your goals.

## Handling Peer Pressure and FOMO

In college, it's natural to want to fit in and participate in as many activities as possible. However, the pressure to keep up with friends or join every social event can be overwhelming, especially if it doesn't align with your personal needs. Recognizing peer pressure is key to making choices that genuinely benefit you. If you feel uncertain about participating in an event, take a moment to consider whether it's something you truly want to do or if you're motivated by a fear of missing out. Setting boundaries with friends can help, too—don't be afraid to respectfully say, "I need a quiet night tonight" or "I've got an early morning, so I'll catch up with you later." Embracing JOMO, or the "Joy of Missing Out," can be a powerful mindset shift. By choosing to spend your time on activities that bring you fulfillment, whether that's reading a book, pursuing a hobby, or simply relaxing, you're actively prioritizing your well-being. Remember, college isn't about doing everything; it's about finding joy and meaning in what matters most to you.

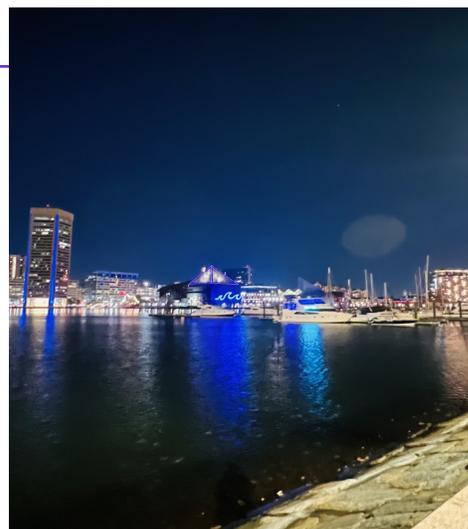
## Learning to Be Alone and Love It

In a bustling college environment, carving out time to be alone may seem strange. However, learning to enjoy solitude can profoundly benefit self-discovery and emotional well-being. Alone time allows you to reflect, recharge, and grow independent of outside influences. Sophomore Brianna Puschenforf spoke to this when she said: "I'm a big reader so I also like to just sit in my room and try to squeeze in a few minutes[...] to read a book, and I also go on walks with my headphones on and just really take in where I am. I noticed that I have more built up energy to be around other people and my mind doesn't have as many thoughts racing through it."



View from outside of the old Donnelly Science Center before the renovation

"I NOTICED THAT I HAVE MORE BUILT UP ENERGY TO BE AROUND OTHER PEOPLE AND MY MIND DOESN'T HAVE AS MANY THOUGHTS RACING THROUGH IT."  
-BRIANNA PUSCHENDORF '27



Federal Hill, Riverfront Marina on Halloween

Here are some ways that you can embrace and enjoy time alone:

- **Start Small:** Begin with short, intentional moments alone, such as a walk around campus or a solo coffee break.
- **Engage in Solo Activities:** Discover activities you enjoy by yourself, like reading, journaling, or exploring some of Baltimore's neighborhoods and all they have to offer. Some of them being: Locust Point, Federal Hill, Fells Point, Towson, and Hampden. Personally, my favorite thing to do to decompress is walking along the water near Federal Hill at night—The streets are always bursting with life, along the marina you will find some of the most luxurious boats you've ever seen. These activities can provide a sense of peace and accomplishment.
- **Use Alone Time for Reflection:** Take this time to assess your goals, values, and progress. Reflecting on your own helps you make choices that align with your true self.



The Senator , Belvedere Square at night

Learning to be comfortable with solitude builds resilience and self-confidence, giving you a solid foundation to thrive in college and beyond.

## Prioritizing Well-Being for a Successful College Experience

College life at Loyola will be filled with opportunities, challenges, and discoveries. Keep the thought in the back of your head that you are here to gain an education and to better yourself—it can be very motivating. By setting boundaries, managing time, and learning to balance your academic, social, and personal life, you create a strong foundation for personal growth and success. Embrace the power of saying "no," make time for self-care, and remember that prioritizing your well-being will enhance every aspect of your college journey.

EMBRACE  
THE POWER  
OF SAYING  
"NO"!

Welcome to Loyola, and here's to a fulfilling, balanced, and enriching experience!

