

Headlight

Written by the students of Marblehead High School for our school and community

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Under Pressure

Dan Rosenberg
Editor-in-Chief, Junior

The biggest problem facing high school students today is not one that's visible. It's not the large workload, it's not the social conflicts, it's not even the stress the intense competition between students to outwork and out-achieve fellow classmates. These just contribute to a much larger problem that encompasses and defines our lives as students.

The pressure put on many students is something that can not only lead to social and personal problems, but physical health problems. Now, I'm not a social scientist or a doctor, so I cannot speak on the biological effects of pressure. However, I am a student, and everyday I not only experience the intense pressures of high school, but I also see the effects these pressures are having on my classmates and peers, so I can speak on what I see and I see something that is quite scary.

As a student, the pressure exerted on one by teachers, classmates, and parents is immense. Everyone knows what's required to get into top colleges and constant reminders from peers and elders just reinforce the intense pressures exerted on students. There's a reason after every test and quiz, students incessantly compare and discuss grades, and it's because they feel the only way to succeed is to beat each other.

As a student in honors and AP courses, I see this frantic comparison and discussion almost daily, and I see the effect it has on students. Because of the pressure to succeed, kids aren't sleeping, they're eating less, and they look haggard and exhausted. And, while it's a very

important contributor, it's not just the workload that's doing this to students. It's the idea of the future, the pressure and stress of searching for colleges, sports, and extracurricular activities that basically overload many students. And eventually, somewhere down the line, it catches up with each and every one of us.

The reason pressure is such a problem, more so than any other problems students might have, is that the immense stress that pressure causes has a rippling effect throughout a student's life. It's not just a problem in relation to school. I've seen pressure create rifts in friendship, because students are so worn thin that they just cannot keep up the pretense of normality in their social lives. I see everyday students dealing with six or seven hours of homework, plus extracurricular activities and sports. The pressure and stress this creates not only causes internal problems, but in turn the student begins to perform poorly in school, or in sports, because they just can't keep up with everything.

Just a couple weeks ago, I had an experience that showed me just how intense the pressure of school can be. One of my friends, who'll remain unnamed for posterity, came in and showed me his first gray hair. At 17 years of age, someone was already going gray.

Working hard in school is necessary. School itself is educational, useful, and an integral part of our society. Parents, teachers, and students themselves need to take a step back, however. It's not only important to look at grades; the toll pressure takes on students and its effects should be monitored just as closely as academic performance.

So Much Homework, and So Little Time

Shanna Smith
Reporter-in-the-field, Sophomore

It is past midnight and you still have an hour of homework left. You spent your afternoon at sports practice or a school club, and you could not start your homework until after dinner. Is it really worth it to finish your homework and ultimately get less than five hours of sleep?

Almost every high school student has been in this situation, excluding those who do not procrastinate or do not participate in extracurricular activities. As the school year progresses and classes become tougher, many students are often forced to choose: homework or sleep? While it is tempting to give up and choose to go to bed, many ambitious students tend to choose the former. And this makes me wonder if the more obedient option is always worth it.

Workload for high school students is heavy, especially during Junior year. It's truly a struggle to get everything done, and get the recommended amount of sleep for a teenager. Often it seems like the only reasonable option is to leave sleep for the weekends, and instead stay up to all hours of the night studying, and doing homework for all sorts of classes. But is this lack of sleep really worth it?

The answer is no. While we sleep, our body stores memories. When an adolescent gets less than eight hours of sleep, his or her brain does not fully store these memories. This means that studying for a test in the wee hours of the night may not help improve one's test score as much as desired, in fact it may be detrimental. Also, when someone is extremely tired during a test, he or she tends to be less aware and make more careless mistakes. The tradeoff between not sleeping and studying more is simply not worth it.

One way to reduce your workload is to finish as much

homework and studying as possible over the weekend. This is surprisingly difficult for most people, myself included, who often resort to procrastination. However, if you participate in extracurricular activities and do not have much time after school, completing some homework assignments over the weekend can come as a huge help and reduce loads of stress.

Another option for the procrastinators out there is to finish homework in increments. For example, after taking notes for thirty minutes, allow yourself a minute or two to check Facebook, or whatever else distracts you. This works because many people do not have the concentration to do homework for hours at a time; therefore they often result to finding larger distractions.

If you still find yourself up past midnight doing homework even with these methods, there are still other ways to improve test performance with minimal sleep. One way is to eat a good breakfast. This helps more than you know; not only is it healthy to eat a protein-filled breakfast from three food groups, but it also makes you more alert during the day. Both your day at school and your test grade will be better when you have a healthy breakfast. Another way to improve test performance is to study a few days in advance. That way, you can remember more of the material, and don't have to spend as much time cramming the night before.

So the next time you are up until 1 am and you cannot decide between completing homework or getting enough sleep, make sure you take into account what you have to lose. Sometimes it is better to simply call it a night. But we all have to accept that that is how life works. It's always best to roll with the punches, and make do with what limited time we do have.

A Love of Christmas

Meredith Piela
Reporter, Sophomore

This Saturday and Sunday mark the beginning of December, as well as the 42nd annual Marblehead Christmas Walk. Although the Walk's festivities have remained consistent for the past several years, the activities that I have taken part in have changed dramatically. When I was younger, the Christmas Walk meant walking down with my family to the Town Landing to see Santa and Mrs. Claus come in on the lobster boat, and then watching the parade go by. Back then, it also meant going to the tree lighting ceremony with my family, as well as singing with the youth choir in Old North Church's Festival Chorus concert. Now, as a sophomore in high school and a member of the MHS Marching Band, I will be marching in the parade with the band. When I see the excited little kids around town, I will be remembering how that used to be me.

There are several things I will always love about the Christmas Walk besides the parade. I will always love: getting to spend time with my family and friends; how the Walk gets me in the holiday spirit; and how it always brings out the jovial child in me. I will always love seeing all the Christmas decorations around town, smelling the sweet and spicy aroma of holiday treats being baked, hearing the jingling of sleigh bells and the wonderful sound of carols, and even feeling the crisp, wintry air. As composer Vince Guaraldi writes so memorably in A Charlie Brown Christmas, "Christmas time is here, happiness and cheer, fun for all that children call, their favorite time of the year."

Need Some Advice?

Maddy Van Dussen
Reporter, Junior

Do you ever feel that you need advice but don't know who to turn to? We've all felt that sense of hopelessness and can probably come to the agreement that it is not the ideal feeling. Sometimes its tempting to spill your guts to someone who has no idea who you are or what your background is- someone who can just listen and hear you, with no previous conceptions of you. It is completely refreshing to talk to one who doesn't have any bias.

For anything you need advice on, whether it's deciding between PB and J or turkey for lunch or dealing with a death of a loved one, you have a friend. Think of it as an anonymous journal that you can receive honest advice on. You may submit anonymously and will receive an anonymous answer in the upcoming week's Headlight. Let our special top secret highly trained advice professional lend you a hand and provide some humble, thoughtful advice. We're here for you and we do want to help.

Headlight email: mhsheadlight@yahoo.com

Seniors: For anyone who applied to college for early admission, early action, or rolling admission, be aware that first quarter grades are automatically sent unless otherwise requested.

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