

PREFRONTAL CORTEX:

Until around age 25, our prefrontal cortex is still developing and growing with new experiences, which we can learn from. This part of the brain focuses attention, implements self control, helps us connect with others through compassion, empowers free-will decision making, lets us make thoughtful judgements and decisions, and is where we develop careful plans from.

As you experience the positive results of all of these things listed above, your prefrontal cortex becomes stronger, and so does your ability to make smarter choices and not be ruled by the impulses of the limbic system.

- LIMBIC SYSTEM :

NG TO KNOW

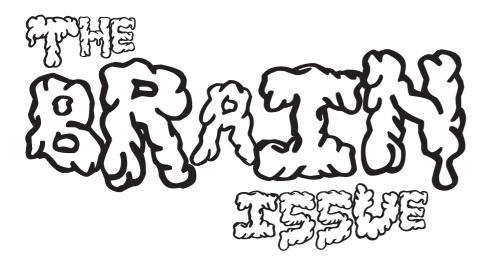
Also known as our "mammal brain," the limbic system is where our core emotions come from. This part of the brain also records memories of things we did that either produced really nice results, or really bad results, creating the strong emotions that we associate with things that remind us of those memories.

It's also home to the very important amygdala, which is where our ancient human "caveman" responses come from. When faced with anything that feels like a threat, it assumes we are being attacked by a saber tooth tiger, and prepares our body to either fight the threat, run away from it, or freeze and play dead. The problem is, our threats aren't saber tooth tigers anymore. They are the fear of telling our crush we like them or the pressure of a STAAR test.

- REPTILIAN BRAIN:

This is called the "oldest" part of our brain because it developed in our reptile ancestors about 400 million years ago. It includes our brain stem and cerebellum, and sits on top of our spinal cord. The reptilian brain controls our basic body functions like our temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and bathroom functions.

source: The Reward Foundation, "Evolutionary Development of the Brain"



Our brains are powerful things, and every choice we make, action we take, and feeling we feel is processed and influenced by our brain. As students, we don't often think about how much our brains influence our lives, and we rarely think about our thinking. Our staff here at the Gavel wanted to explore this, because we believe it's important to learn more about what's going on in our brains in order to solve any problems we might face. In the Brain Issue, we delve into the minds of teens in order to get a better understanding of what takes place in the brain during a variety of situations, including when we procrastinate, when we're stressed, when we fight, and more. We hope this issue helps you understand yourself and others better and empowers you to take control of your thinking!

-Gavel Editors

IN THIS ISSUE:

PROCRASTI-NATION PG. 4

Students battle brains to beat back procrastination impulse

IT'S YOUR CAVEMAN BRAIN PG 6

Why students fight and how to avoid it

THINKING ABOUT THINKING BRAIN QUI7 PG. 8

What were you thinking?

I AM LOSING IT PG 10

Suffering under consistent stress bad news for teen brains

COMPREHEND THE TREND PG 17

How do trends take hold in student minds?

IF YOU LOVE ME. YOU WILL... PG. 14

OPINION: Think critically, notice signs of toxic relationships

YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND PG 15

OPINION: You can change your negative thoughts, lifestyle

BACK PAGE PG. 16

Sports Shorts, Comic Relief, & Shout Outs

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Students battle brains to beat back procrastination impulse

by Natalia Martinez, Managing Editor

Victoria Garcia and Jenessa Moncovich, Contributors

After a long day of school and work, still smelling like Bill Miller's fried food, she stares over at her backpack, dreading the pages and pages of homework and projects overflowing from the unzipped bag. She freezes in thought for a minute that feels like an hour, debating her options in her head; attacking the pile of frustrating, seemingly pointless school work, or pulling Netflix open on her phone, and binging one more episode of her favorite show. A few taps of her thumb, and the choice is made. Her body relaxes, she breathes a sigh of relief, and the show begins to play. She may regret the decision tomorrow when her teacher asks for her work, but everything is good right now.

This scenario is all too familiar to students on campus. It's called procrastination, and even though students know it can be the thing that keeps them from getting that scholarship or walking across the stage at graduation, it still wins out more often than not. While students surrender to procrastination for various reasons, they don't always know why it's so easy to procrastinate and what about it is and is not times I go play with [my siblings] because I really in their direct control.

Our brains have a lot to do with how easy it is to procrastinate, but students don't often think about what's going on with the neurons and chemicals in their head. Instead, students like junior Hector Escalante can only guess at his reasons for procrastinatina.

"I guess it's my fault," Escalante said. "I know I

should be doing my work, but I just choose not to because a lot of the time I just don't feel like doing it pler reason in his view. even though I know I should."

Escalante isn't the only one who blames himself for giving into procrastination because he can't seem to generate the feelings or will needed to do the work. Senior Yvette Diaz admits that she turns her work in on time about 65 percent of the time, consistently putting the rest of it off because of a lack of feeling motivated.

"I don't feel like working on my school things so I tell myself, 'I'll just do it in the morning,' then end up for procrastination. not doing it," Diaz said.

Still other students like senior Christine Garcia find themselves putting off school work because they are physically tired from demanding jobs or practice, or because they have responsibilities at home as well, like taking care of younger siblings. Even then, she recognizes that sometimes it just feels better to do something else.

"It's not even always them," Garcia said. "Somedon't feel like doing my work."

Some teachers also infer that students procrastinating is due to students being "lazy" as well. Algebra pre-AP teacher Rodolfo Lopez explains the difference in how his students procrastinate. He believes that for students taking Pre-AP and rigorous courses, it's the quantity of work that leads to procrastination, while for students not successful in

non-AP course work procrastinate for a much sim-

"For people who are not in advanced courses, it is probably because they do not have goals or don't care enough about homework because it's not important to them," Lopez said.

While it's evident that most students and teachers conclude that procrastination is directly connected to laziness, lack of effort, or poor time management, experts in the brain and in psychology, suggest there are much more intricate and complex reasons

According to licensed psychologist and specialist in the science behind procrastination Dr. William J. Knaus, students' tendency to procrastinate has less to do with simply being lazy and is usually more connected to how they deal with anxiety and depression. He explains that a fear of failure is what feeds procrastination in many children, teens, and adults.

Knaus says that because students are afraid to fail, it is easier for them to just avoid the activity they fear they might fail at so they don't have to feel the shortterm anxiety, fear, or uncertainty in the moment. While that avoidance makes sense to our body and survival brain in the moment, it too often leads to the exact real failure that students were afraid of in the first place as a consequence of procrastinating.

Instead, Knaus suggests students pay attention to the fears and feelings they are having when they find themselves avoiding unpleasant or difficult

things, and try to remind themselves of the reality.

"Look for exaggerations," Knaus writes. " Awareness is a good place to start combating fear of failure."

According to Knaus, one thing to try in order to start getting past procrastination is changing how we think about our tasks. Instead of thinking of them cal brain structure and development, there are a as something we can either be successful at or be a we can learn how to get better from.

"When you take this experimental approach to self-development, you may discover a path to selfconfidence," Knaus writes. "Fear of failure will soon lose its grip on your decision making, allowing you to achieve your goals."

Not only is fear a factor, but brain researcher Erhan Genc of Ruhr University Bochum points out that even the physical shape and size of different parts of our brain can make some students have a harder time getting over procrastination.

His study found that in the amyqdala (an almond-shaped structure in the temporal lobe which processes emotions and controls our motivation) was larger in procrastinators.

"Individuals with a larger amygdala may be more anxious about the negative consequences of an action and tend to hesitate and put thing's off," Genc said.

Complicating things for students, is how the actual parts of the brain work and develop to help us in the battle against procrastination. The front part of the brain, called the prefrontal cortex, is the part of the brain that we need most for making decisions end of their checklist. Students report using strateand more complex thinking. This part of the brain is still growing, learning how to function, and developing during the teen years until about 25 years old in most humans. It's at war with a much older, and in teens, much stronger part of the brain we call the limbic system where the amygdala resides. It's located in the center core of the brain and controls things like our emotions and our caveman instincts to fight a threat or run away from it.

For students who aren't paying close attention to what they are thinking or feeling, the limbic, caveman part of the brain in the core usually wins out.

tor's Digest and professor of psychology at Carleton grades are going to go down, and it's going to build University, in Ottawa, explains how it's often too easy up stress." to chase good feelings in the moment, and how it

even feels more natural to procrastinate.

"The moment you're not consciously engaged in a task, your limbic system takes over, and you give in to what feels good," Pychyl writes. "Which is anything but that book report--you procrastinate."

Between students' anxiety, fear of failure, physilot of obstacles students must work through to end failure at, we can look at them as "experiments" that their habit of procrastinating, but that doesn't mean students can't do anything about it.

> While it is important to know that we may not control every aspect of why we procrastinate, we can exercise a few skills and tricks to help train our brains to be less prone to putting off work.

The brain experts say that taking time to think about what "THE MOMENT YOU'RE NOT we are thinking and why, paying attention to our feelings CONSCIOUSLY ENGAGED IN A and reminding ourselves that we sometimes exaggerate how TASK, YOUR LIMBIC SYSTEM difficult or bad something is can all help get students to work past TAKES OVER, AND YOU GIVE the intense "not feeling like it" moments. They also suggest that IN TO WHAT FEELS GOOD. students should be very purposeful about reminding themselves of the good feelings that WHICH IS ANYTHING BUT come with success and getting things accomplished in the long THAT BOOK REPORT -- YOU term, and push themselves to wait for those feelings instead of settling for the moment of happiness we get by doing something more fun right away.

Instead of becoming frustrat-

ed with all the work that stacks up, some students use strategies like making a list of what needs to get done and checking off work as they finish it. This helps them stay organized and push towards the gies like making a schedule and planning out time and space specifically for studying or attending tutoring without having to give up free time, and even scheduling free time too. Even simple things like setting deadlines and taking on easier parts first help students on campus kick the procrastination habit.

PROCRASTINATE."

-Timothy A. Pychyl, PhD,

Students' brains may make it difficult to shake off the instinct to procrastinate, but students that do the work to overcome procrastination understand why it's important.

"Putting it aside every time is just going to build up even more work,"sophomore Ben Vasquez Timothy A. Pychyl, PhD, author of The Procrastina- said. "If you put school to the side every time, your



11111111

-Make a list of your tasks that need to be done and mark them off as you ao.



-Create an organized calendar and mark important school work due dates on it.

-Set reminders on your phone or leave a sticky note on your desk, fridge, notebook etc.



-Schedule tutoring hours with a teacher or tutor, and show up.



-Set aside an hour or two to study.



-Schedule mental breaks. It is always healthy to take a few minutes and step away from your work to avoid getting frustrated, just be sure to stick to your break schedule.



-Keep a timer for your important tasks, and homework.



-Take naps (only 30 mins) to help with getting focused.



-Finish the easier tasks first to get momentum, and build up to the more difficult tasks.



Why students fight and how to avoid it

by Paige Borenheim, Co-Editor and Julian Munoz, Staff Writer

period when you get to a stopping point; a crowd of hundreds of students. Students push and shove, swarming like vultures on a carcass, all just trying to get a view of what has brought the school day to a stand still. Loud cheers, taunts, and slurs come from everywhere in the crowd, so you do as you see everyone else doing, and pull out your phone to capa group of students viciously go after one another until administrators rush in to break it up. When the action dies down, you begin to wonder: what drives students to get into these very public fights?

Students have theories and reasons why they believe these fights happen, whether to get attention, to prove they shouldn't be messed with, or any number of other reasons. What most students may not understand is what happens in our brains that make these fights more likely to happen, and how to well. Having found herself in a fight once, she control it.

Educational consultant Kendra Cherry works to help students understand psychology, and she explains that most fights occur due to the brain's fight-or-flight response, a part of our ancient survival harassment, and feeling like she had no way out. instincts where our brain, when it feels like there is a threat, sends out instructions for our body to either get ready to fight off the threat or run away from it. This was useful to our caveman ancestors when they found themselves running from predators or at war with other tribes constantly, but it gets us into more trouble in the modern-day, where there are better solutions than just fighting or running away that result in better outcomes.

This "fight or flight" instinct that makes students so prone to fight is a physiological reaction within

You're rushing down the hallway to make it to 4th the amygdala, a part of the brain within the limbic system, at the inner core of our brains. To get a better understanding of where this part of our brain is located, we can place our thumb under our fingers in a fist formation, with four fingers wrapped over the thumb, and our thumb represents the amygdala. The covering fingers represent the part of the brain that developed after the formation of the limbic ture what is going down: A fight has broken out, and system in humans, and is where we develop our reasoning, empathy, ability to think critically and ability to analyze. The inner section of the brain controls much older instincts like our motivation, emotion, and ability to learn and store memories. When certain events abruptly emerge, this may trigger your motivation or emotions, which are stronger than our reasoning brain in students, causing the fight-orflight response to take control.

> Junior Aries Burnette knows this reaction guite understands where most students come from when this takes place. She wouldn't normally get into a fight, but believes she was motivated by self-defense after being inserted into drama, rumors, and

> "If someone hits me, I feel like I almost have to go beneath them to get them to understand not to mess with me," Burnette said. "I did think about [the consequences] beforehand, but the other person disrespected me, so I had to make her stop."

Looking back, Burnette understands that her overwhelming instincts to do anything to make it stop kept her from thinking rationally about how it would affect other areas of her life.

"It was overwhelming because I was on the track team and involved in a lot of things that had conse-

artwork by Angel Tran

guences." Burnette said.

Campus administrators discipline those involved in fights with suspension, and even possible criminal charges. Although many students don't want negative marks on their permanent school records, some are still willing to take the risk and allow their fight or flight response to be in control. And once it's all over, and they give back control to their rational brain, students often feel the same way Burnette does.

said. "It was a one time thing. I didn't even plan on fighting that day, like at all."

It's not just the brain's fight or flight response that pushes students into a fight, but also a deeplyengrained psychological and sociological instinct

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-Dr. Charles Stangor

to defend our reputations in public. Dating back to different eras in history and based on what regions of the world our cultures and ancestors have been influenced by, humans have always had the tendency to prove their worth. Best-selling researcher and author Malcolm Gladwell, in his book Outliers, points out that those of us influenced by certain family ideas or cultures can trace our ideas about "sticking up for ourselves" all the way back to animal-herding cultures in mountainous regions of the

world. Gladwell explains that when these cultures tended to their flocks or herds, and another person challenged their strength or tried to take over important grazing grounds, the normal thing to do in this culture was to have a public showdown with whoever was threatening your way of life. These fights and duels were almost always in a very public a fight will solve their problems, it usually makes place, so that the individuals fighting could prove they were not weak to their entire community.

Instead of fighting, our society now favors people psychologist Dr. Charles Stangor. who are able to resolve conflicts and get along with others, and usually looks down on people with a history of violence, anger issues, and a lack of selfcontrol.

Gladwell suggests that ideas like "standing up for yourself" and "fighting back if someone disrespects you" get passed down to us by our cultures and families, and we still use those concepts, even though they are outdated and none of us are herding sheep or cattle anymore.

Senior Ruby Gradillas admits that she has done that very thing, fighting to prove a point to people. Although she mainly fights with her sister at home,

a fight on campus in previous years was to take a stance on her social status.

"They said I wasn't gonna do anything about it and that I was [soft], and I'm not," Gradillas said.

With an event that only lasts seconds before being broken up, many students boast about their short victory in hopes of being seen as fierce among their peers, and like those ancient shepherds, are not to be taken lightly or pushed around.

"It was done within a matter of seconds, but it "I actually don't even like fighting at all," Burnette felt good," Gradillas said. "I got to show that I wasn't [soft]."

> Speech teacher Katherine Hodgdon has taught on campus for 13 years and has been witness to, and even broken up fights. Some of the ways she's seen students avoid fights is by understanding that

there are better ways to release their built up anger, including talking to someone that they trust. Hodgdon has a handful of students who talk to her about any troubles they have and she provides them with advice. While this has often helped students engage their thinking, analytical brain and avoid a fight, it can still be difficult to choose those rational thoughts due to our caveman evolutionary instincts that favor aggression as a survival instinct. Even so, Hodgdon tries to help her students see that the stakes aren't as high as their fight-or-flight brains are telling them.

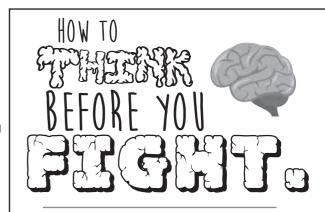
"I wish kids would just learn to just let it go," Hodgdon said. "It's not going to impact your manhood. Girls aren't going to run away from you if you don't beat this guy up. Let it go."

While the brain, cultural, and psychological influences can all team up to make students believe that things worse according to observers, those who have been involved in them, and experts like social

"The ability to aggress is part of the evolutionary adaptation of humans," Stangor said. "But aggression in not the only, nor always the best, approach to dealing with conflict."

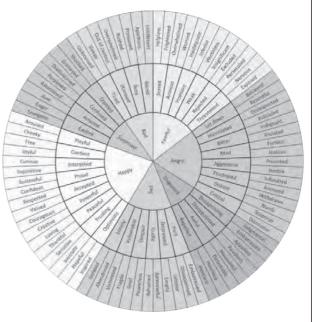
Ultimately, it's up to students to recognize that no matter what, they will still be held responsible for their actions, and to slow down and give their thinking brains a chance to win.

"It's not worth it," Burnette said. "You're just going to make yourself look different towards other people and you're not going to look like a good person like you would initially think. It's not worth it."



So what do you do if you find yourself sliding into an aggressive mindset and wanting to fight someone? You have to use strategies that allow your brain to move out of the fight-or-flight emotions of the moment centered in your amygdala, and into your pre-frontal cortex, thinking brain. With help from author Arlin Cuncic and verywellmind. com, here are four things to try before you throw hands.

Name your emotions as you experience them. This helps to engage the thinking part of your brain and trigger mindfulness. If you have trouble knowing your emotions, consider using a "wheel of emotions" created by Dr. Robert Plutchik to identify what you're feeling.



Take deep breaths from your abdomen. Breathing deeply helps bring oxygen to your brain and slows you down. Try breathing in deeply, then breathing out for a longer count than you breathed in.

Use mindfulness practices. Look around you, notice and list things you see. This helps move you out of your survival brain and into a more reasonable view of the situation.

Take time out. If you feel like you're losing control, excuse yourself from the situation. Get somewhere where you can breath and have a chance to regain control of your emotions.

THINKING ABOUT THINKING

What were you thinking?

by Jarlyn Landeros, Staff Writer and Jayce Sibley, Staff Writer original artwork by Citlali Diaz The brain controls our thoughts which influence our actions, whether we realize it or not. We interviewed students and asked them to choose how they think they would react in a variety of scenarios. Based on their response and our review of research on the brain, psychology, and sociology by experts, we offer suggestions of what might be happening in a student's brain to cause their reaction. Take the quiz yourself and learn more about what's going on in

You're at a restaurant during off campus lunch and you find a hair in your food, do you...

- (A) Remove the hair yourself and say nothing.
- B Politely explain and ask for them to remake your it still connects the two so it needs a new food.
- (C) Yell at your waiter and ask to speak to the manager to demand a refund.
- (D) Eat it anyway and try not to think about it.

Patrick Hobart chose option B, "I wouldn't want to have hair on my food and I would want them to know."

unior Hector

According to experts, in option A, the brain sees a problem it can solve on it's own so it doesn't feel the need to involve anyone else in it. The opposite occurs in option B, where the brain doesn't think it can fully solve the problem by itself. Because the hair was already in the food, meal where the two aren't connected. In option C, people blow up over a tiny hair B Jump in the fight. because the brain either has problems processing anger or dealing with it. In option D, the brain experiences socioemotional selectivity theory where it sees life as scarce, leading to decisions where caution is thrown to the wind.



You're in class taking a test and you can see another person's answers who you know studies, do of making an ethical decision like the you..

- A Ignore the answers and focus on your own work
- B Copy every one of their answers.
- \bigcirc Only copy the answers on questions you don't \bigcirc Take a picture and send it to your friends.



nior Lanay Vheaton chose D, got to look out or me and the

phomore Jewel Martinez chose option C because don't want to ail. Think smarter, not harder."

According to experts, your brain is capable person in option A, it just takes a lot of self control. People who cheat experience a lack of development of the moral center in their brain causing them to cheat like people in option B and C. For people in option D, the prefrontal cortex or the decision part of your brain is trying to conform to societal norms so that people will like you and accept you.



idoval chose ption C, "I thinl would get an ninistrator ecause I don't want to just jump in and both of us get in more

trouble."



ose like family and that's someone I care for." According to experts, in option A the brain is experiencing schadenfreude, receiving You're walking to class when your best friend gets pleasure at the expense of someone else.

People in option B are experiencing an "us" versus "them" situation in the brain where all moral codes are suppressed. People in option C believe in the "authority principle," trusting that authority figures are generally wiser and that if you comply with them, the outcome is more favorable. In option D, the brain has already set goals in mind and simply ignores the situation because it doesn't allow them to get closer to reaching those goals.







- B Never bring it up.

NOVEMBER 2019

8 THE GAVEL

your head.



Escalante chose D, "I'd just eat it, honestly. It's not really that gross o me

into a fight, do you... A Record the fight.

© Get an administrator. 🔘 Walk right past it and go to class.

A Tell the person they dropped their money or turn it into the lost and found.

B Walk by without picking up the money

© Take the money for yourself and spend it as fast those without the self discipline of this as you can.

D Wait for awhile and if no one's picked up the money, then you'll keep it.

You catch your best friend's girlfriend holding hands with someone else, do you...

A Tell your best friend what you saw.

© Tell your best friend's girlfriend you caught her. and D, the same thing is occurring as your

O Confront the person who they cheated with.



Sophomore Travis Oatridge chose option A because "It's good karma to return it."

inior Aliyah ickson chose D, If they came back for it or someone said, 'hey that's mine,' then yes, 'm going to give it back. But if they don't, then I'm keeping it."

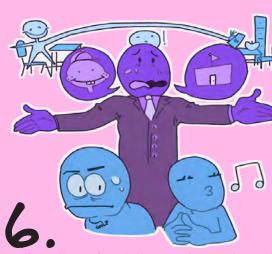
According to experts, the brain is capable of making an ethical decision when a lot of energy is put into the decision making deep thought are more likely to make an unethical decision like option C. People might stay away from the money because the situation makes thm uncomfortable, so they avoid it altogether like someone would in option B. People in option D are fighting two separate, different ideas in their brain and finally, one idea wins, with the brain rationalizing that the idea is right.

> Sophomore Marissa Resendiz chose option C, I'd tell the girl caught her ecause what if it was a joke, you don't know the full story until you

ask.' enior Alissa lartinez chose al f the above, "first off that's rude. econd off, that's ny best friend, why would you do

that?"

According to experts, when the brain feels empathy but doesn't know how to solve a problem, it passes it off like the person in option A. In option B, the brain is experiencing a conflict that makes it uncomfortable so it avoids it altogether. In options C brain is placing the blame on someone that's causing the problem, so in order to solve the problem they approach the person they blame for it.



Your friend sees five dollars on the teacher's desk and pockets it. The next day, the teacher asks the whole class who took it and tearfully explains that like a person would in option A. However, the five dollars was for their seven-year-old's school fundraiser, do you....

- A Secretly sneak your own five dollars back on the returned at some point in time. In option desk
- B After class, guilt your friend and convince them to turn it back in.
- © Snitch on your friend after class.
- D Suggest a few other suspects to the teacher to get the heat off of your friend.



It's the night of prom, your date is over 30 minutes late to meet you before you head out, and they aren't answering your texts do you...

- A Ditch your plans and go home.
- B Continue to wait for your date.
- C Head to prom by yourself.

 \bigcirc Find a different date and go to prom with them.



Sanchez chose option B, "Mess ing with other people's money messed up and you don't know if it's a set up for a social experiment or not, like if there's a hidden camera."



Junior Destinv Sanchez chose A "That's just the ight thing to do."

According to experts, in option A the brain in its own nature must care for others deeply, and that is why the money was B, secrets are often kept unsaid when a person wants to feel accepted. In options C, the "authority principle" from question #3 is at play again. In option D your amyg dala, the brain's emotional processing center, is underdeveloped, so you fail to see the pain this causes others.



Sophomore Leilah Saldana chose option C because "Why would I wait around for him?"

Junior Daemon Saenz-Lopez chose option B, "Life is

hard and everyone has problems to deal with. It will pay off when they show up and you have the time of your life."

According to experts, in option A, people who get embarrassed in situations often try to avoid them like heading home if you're date doesn't show up. The fight, flight, or freeze response occurs in this situation with people who froze, not knowing how to react and stand still, like a person in option B would do. Option C would be a person who reverts to isolation in the face of problems. People in option D are highly adaptable in situations, and they have high brain plasticity which is the part of the brain that is able to adapt.







Worked late. Didn't sleep. So much drama. Need to study. Another project due. Grandma is sick. Mom needs help. I'm watching my little cousins tonight. There is nothing to eat. I'm worn out. PRACTICE WEAT long. I can't do this.

105MQ

Suffering under consistent stress bad news for teen brains

by Janice Ramirez, Executive Editor and Devanie Jo Rodriguez, Staff Writer

After school, they hit the fields; once at home, sweaty and exhausted, they hit the books. Dozing off as they attempt to complete the neverending list ties outside of the classroom, which often leads to of assignments, they begin to doubt they can even complete everything on time. As hours run by, they worry about the lack of rest that they will get. They keep checking the clock knowing they have to wake dealing with all of her school responsibilities as up early the next morning, and they begin to dread the thought of having to repeat this routine all over again.

The weight of stress affects students on campus, mentally, physically and emotionally. With extracurricular activities, working demanding jobs, and rigorous courses, students rarely get a break from their being that my mom is sick," Hernandez said. "I just stress, which can have long-term negative effects on their brains. To avoid these effects, students have to So I just tell myself that I have to do it either way." have a plan of how to manage it.

Without a plan to manage their stress, students often develop bad habits which can eventually evolve from stress to anxiety and even depression. In a community where mental health is not often a priority, students find themselves having difficulties finding balance, being positive, and maintaining a healthy mindset.

Students find it easy to put their emotional and

mental health aside in order to complete their assignments and keep up with their many responsibilifeelings of being overwhelmed by the stress, leaving student's drive to finish their work, and often leads students in a place where they feel helpless.

Junior Jenifer Hernandez knows this first hand, well as added responsibilities at home due to her mother's illness and having to take care of her, work- same energy anymore. We start giving up." ing to pay for expenses, keeping her home united and still managing to attend swim practices and school everyday.

feel like it's not fair, but then again, when is life fair?

Hernandez isn't alone in trying to handle their stress from school, work, family, and sometimes unfair circumstances. While all students have different circumstances that makes up their stress, they often share a common feeling expressed by junior Ariana Martinez.

"I feel like it's just a big headache," Martinez said. "Like everything's all on my shoulders and like I'm

being dragged everywhere."

This feeling, originating in the core of the brain in what's called the limbic system, can set back a to depression.

"We become overwhelmed, and once we become overwhelmed, we get down about it," Hernandez said. "Then we start kind of like not having the

Dealing with all of these big feelings becomes more complicated when students try and power through the stress, which often leads to "pulling "I get emotional and I have to deal with this stress, all-nighters" or the brain and body staying in "gomode" to the point where students experience a lack of sleep and aren't able to wind down and let their bodies and brain rest. Loss of sleep, also known as sleep deprivation, is one of the most powerful ways to negatively affect our brains.

> "There's been times where I'll stay up all night working on school stuff and the day after, it's not really worth it because I'm falling asleep in class," junior Christian Malley said. "But I do it just to stay on top of my grades and school work."

When the brain is suffering and is unable to

handle such big emotions, not only do students lose motivation to complete even the simplest of tasks, but other areas of their life can suffer, including becoming more irritable and taking things out on those around them, often driven by the limbic system's fight-or-flight response

people who don't deserve it, which is bad," Martinez said. "Those relaxation strategies can be deep said. "But that's why I have a new method, which is taking time away from [the stressful thing] and then going back and doing it."

Martinez's new method of taking a break is just the type of thing students' brains need, it turns out. According to therapist and licenced master social worker Sarah Picken, understanding that our brain has different parts that do different things is essential to developing strategies for handling stress.

"Every minute of the day, there is a part of our brain that scans for stressful situations," Picken said. "When the 'scanner' of our brain picks up a stressful situation, it tells our brain to release chemicals and divert energy away from other parts of the brain that are less important to staying safe."

During these stressful situations, students can be at risk of becoming anxious or potentially experiencing depression, especially if they are not aware of any effective tactics and positive ways to act upon their stress in order to relieve it.

"The problem with stress is that if we're not careful and diligent about our relaxation and calming strategies, our one-time stress can turn into longterm anxiety," Picken said. "It's almost as if our brain forgets to turn off the switch on all the stress chemicals being released, which leaves us feeling tense

and anxious for long after the stressful event has finished."

Like Martinez, it's important for students to use strategies that work in order to reduce tension and stress when they experience it.

"One way to turn that switch off is to practice "When I'm stressed, I usually cry or get mad at the relaxation strategies after a stressful event," Picken

> "THE PROBLEM WITH STRESS IS THAT IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL AND DILIGENT ABOUT OUR RELAXATION AND CALMING STRATEGIES, OUR ONE-TIME STRESS CAN TURN INTO LONG-TERM ANXIETY."

-Sarah Picken, LMSW

breathing, exercising, sleeping well and doing any type of mindfulness activities."

When the brain experiences stress, not only is it important for the student to prioritize stressrelieving strategies, but the community around the student should encourage these practices as well. Parents and teachers play a key role in providing and encouraging the use of these helpful tools in

order to support students who face emotional stress. Because students can't often count on parents and teachers to encourage these strategies, they have to first develop their own stress-relief routines in order to cope.

"The ways I cope with stress is to exercise regularly so that my body can release the tension from the work day," Pickens said. "Then I can feel nice and tired for sleep. I also like to make sure that I'm eating well and sleeping a good amount of time at night so my body can rest and regain energy that it might have lost while I was feeling stressed. And good food can also give me nutrients that give me energy and even build up any muscles or any tissues that I've been wearing down due to stress."

According to Picken, it's important that students make stress-relieving activities a priority for their mental health, and to give their brains a break so that the stress doesn't lead to anxiety and depression.

If students don't know where to start, Picken suggests trying deep-breathing, which is breathing in through your nose like you're smelling flowers, and then out through your mouth like you're blowing out candles, making sure your out breath is longer than your in breath. Or students can also try temperature changes, like taking a hot shower or putting a cold washcloth on their shoulders or forehead. Picken also emphasized that exercise and eating healthy help relieve stress as well.

"Just make sure you try at least one thing," Picken said. "Even trying something can begin to relieve stress."



ing up, I never had the best clothes or shoes and kids were so quick to judge and make fun of me without even knowing the true reason behind it all and what was going on at home. Doing things that all the kids my age are doing is never an option.

I grew up loving being in athletics and lot of energy. I always had big dreams of being successful because of the struggles I had as a child. Working towards this dream has been so crazy, and I've felt as if I am drowning numerous times. I get scared that one day I won't be able to get back up and keep working towards my goals.

Unlike other "normal" students I can't unfortunate incidents.

make school my priority because I have to work and take care of myself since the majority of the time my mom isn't capable of doing so. It is depressing because I know my potential, but having to work to pay for my expenses, maintain my house, and swim takes a

I only have so much energy and all of these responsibilities don't allow me to give school the amount of energy that I wish I could. Knowing my potential and being robbed from it is the biggest worry I have. It is extremely sad to not have a choice and feel forced to do certain tasks because of multiple





If You Give an Influencer a Cookie

The Innovator- This is where the life of a trend starts. The innovators are usually interested or oblivious to the mainstream. They walk a fine line between failure and success, as many fail to appeal to a broader audience. Those who do succeed though is because their message resonates with a larger audience and is easily palatable by the Early Adopters. The Early Adopters- While the Innovators create the trend, it's the Early Adopters who set it afloat. They translate the new experimental look into something more presentable to the mainstream. They tweak it just enough for the Early Majority to claim.

The Early Majority-These are typically the first people you see wearing the trend. They'll wear the trend just enough for you to start to notice. Once seeing it around enough, you'll head over to a store to try and imitate it. Welcome to the Late Majority.

produce watered down versions of what the Early Adopters created. For those who aren't too frisky about fashion and want to be in the latest style, this is the category for you. Sellers like H&M and Nike thrive here as they wait to jump on the latest "it" item.

The Laggers- "Outdated" style is a big buzzword in this category. They try something "new" when its been so assimilated into the culture that's it seems "traditional". They're in no rush to try something different and are perfectly comfortable staying in their fashion bubble. Unfortu-Source: https://www.mrporter.com/en-hk/journal/theread/how-do-trends-happen/527?setupsession=false

HOW DO TRENDS TAKE HOLD IN STUDENT MINDS? by Lucille Gradillas, Creative Director



Trends

Ever notice how it always seems as soon you start to like something, the culture moves on to something new? As social media usage increases, the longevity of a trend decreases. Before the age where anyone with a smartphone could become like this bracelet or these shoes, then an "influencer," trends developed from innovators within very specific subcultures. What would have once taken years to become mainstream, now only takes the tap of the "post" button. Why are we so influenced by what the people we admire post? What factors make a trend happen and how do our own thinking and actions play a roll in it all?



COMPREHEND THE

Should We Follow Trends? Whether or not we should follow trends has been debated since the age of the Romans. Here's what your peers have to

say about it: "You can make more friends if you have stuff in common with other people. However, it could get too much to people's head. They'd start to think 'If I don't have people won't like me."

-Christine Teran, 11th

"I say, do your thing. It doesn't matter if you follow trends or not. If you like them, follow them. There is a positive to trends like the Ice Bucket Challenge, where everyone came together and donated money to ALS."

-Victoria Hernandez, 11th



My Monkey Brain & I

Even if our tails devolved out, aspects like "pack mentality" stayed within our brains. The prefrontal cortex, which functions include reasoning, logic, and problem solving, lies inactive when we act in groups or rally for a cause. What once protected our ancestors from dangerous outside forces, now usually just boils down to peer pressure. To feel a part of a group, people will often imitate behaviors in an effort to look more like the clique. This includes buying name brands, dressing a certain way, and even how we communicate with one and other.

"If everyone's the same, they have a common ground. So they're like, 'Oh, you're cool because you have the same interest as me or you look the same as me.' So now there's like ten girls that say they have style but all look the same." -Maile Casanova, 11th



Yawns are like Trends

"Human culture exists through a constant The Late Majority- Here is where sellers cycle of innovation and emulation. Yawns are infectious not because they're airborne, but because they show empathy and understanding. They show that you're part of the group."

-Jonathan Openshaw, The Future Laboratory

"Generally I see trends in like clothing, where people like to wear boots with bootcut jeans; a cowboy style." -Enrique Ruiz, 12th

"The crop tops in like 60 degree weather" -Maile Cassanova, 11th "People, girls mostly, were big hoodies. They wear some big hoodies even though nately, this is where trends go to die. they're probably three sizes smaller." -Ruben Chapa, 12th

12 THE GAVEL

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OPINION: Think critically, notice signs of toxic relationships

Staff Editorial

ship is. Even on our campus, you might recognize or know of some people who are a part of these type of poor relationships. We believe it's important not worthy. to help students on this campus understand the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship, and the kinds of things that might be going on selfish person will use the term as a way of makin the heads of people caught up in them.

Toxic relationships can be with anyone; a boyfriend, girlfriend, or even a friendship. Whatever the Any pressure to do things you don't want to do situation, it's first important to know that you are not at fault, and that you deserve better. It's also important to think critically about your relationships and examine them for these frequent signs of toxicity.

Mental abuse can be the most significant part of a toxic partnership. This kind of abuse can blur your vision from seeing the poisonous actions of a partner or friend. If you are constantly feeling you are being undermined or stripped of your self-esteem, these are signs of a harmful relationships. For example, "joking" that includes harsh or painful bits of truth, or that attacks your known insecurities can be mental abuse. It is hard to lose insecurities when you are constantly reminded of them in a so-called "joke."

Another form of mental abuse can present itself as "sarcasm." The other person will say something they "don't mean" and after hurting your feelings,

Students may have heard relationships described things so seriously." These are destructive characas "toxic" without knowing fully what a toxic relation- teristics of a relationship that you should steer clear from. Natural and healthy relationships are never perfect, but they will not make you feel belittled or

> The sneakiest form of toxic manipulation is the use of the phrase, "If you love me you will _____." A ing you feel inferior to them, managing to use your weaknesses against you, similar to blackmailing. or aren't ready to do with this phrase is manipulation. In relationships, it can also be presented as an ultimatum, or an attempt to pressure you to not take self a break for making mistakes and learn on your action in breaking up or leaving them. They will tell you all these nice things like they are in love with you or they can't live without you, when in reality, they more likely are just afraid to be alone.

> Of course, physical abuse, non-consensual attempts at physical intimacy, verbal abuse, and emotional abuse are all clear signs of a toxic relationship. exiting a toxic, violent, or abusive relationship as No matter how good the "good" is in a relationship, if these issues are present, it is not a healthy relation- through these things, you can call the National Doship and it's a guarantee that the good will fade and you'll be left with the bad.

The serious question students need to ask is how we leave a toxic relationship.

When someone is in a toxic relationship, having boundaries or leaving can be scary, with partners or happy and genuine life, including connections with they often will tell you to "calm down," and "not take friends threatening all kinds of things on themselves others that are healthy and life-giving.

or you. However scary it is, face your fear. You can't just get up and change your whole life around in one day.

Take your time and energy to find out who you are without this person, and make sure you can function on your own if you're in a relationship or not. Learn that love, support, and intimacy can be found all around us, and not just in this relationship.

The most difficult step in this process is realizing your self worth. It may seem impossible and hard, but this did not happen because you are flawed or "not enough;" you are human. You must give yourown that you are worthy of happiness and a healthy relationship.

If you find yourself in a relationship with these warning signs, find someone you can trust, like a counselor or trusted adult, and talk to them. There are hotlines you can call to help guide you through well. If you or someone you know may be going mestic Violence hotline at, 1-800-799-7233. Reach out so that someone has a chance to listen and help you. We challenge you to push yourself beyond the emotional core of your brain, and think critically about your relationships today. All people deserve a



artwork by Citlali Diaz

OPINION: You can change your negative thoughts, lifestyle

Personal Opinion Column by Harmoni Guerrero, Opinion Director

Things change all around us, but do we believe that people around us can change? Is who we are and how we think about the world something fixed in our brains, or is it something that we can grow, develop, and ultimately change for the better?

When I talk about change, I don't mean just cutting back on a certain food or not procrastinating, but changing your whole view of life and persona. I believe that we can begin to train our thoughts to be different and change these things, because I've done it myself.

Every day, I wonder what I can do to make myself a better me, and the person I used to be is not even close to the person I am today. In the past, negativity consumed my brain and formed my whole take on life. It was not safe for anyone. I just went off on everyone and I didn't care about anyone's feelings; not even my own.

Was it always my fault? Yes and no. While I was responsible for my actions, my depression had taken I started getting help, seeing a therapist who provid- If you're interested, contact me from your NISD stuover all of my emotions and made me so angry towards everything and everyone. I was so angry all

of the time that I blamed everything and everyone for my sadness and that led to more anger, which pushed many away; even the friends I thought of as family.

Feeling alone was the biggest problem for me to deal with (even though, looking back, I was never alone) because my depression made me focus on the thought that nobody cared. What I can tell you now is that you are not alone, even though you feel like the world is always against you. I know you are angry or sad about feeling like this, but there are ways to change the thoughts that you are thinking and the emotions that you are feeling.

Over time, and with a lot of work, change took over my life in a positive way. I started changing the way I looked at life in my thoughts. I took those steps for myself and wouldn't let my depression grab me by the hand and drag me through the dirt. I let go of ity in The Gavel or The Gavel Online so that other my negative thinking and let positivity consume me. students can be inspired, we want to hear from you. ed a safe place for me to talk about everything and who helped me open up and know how to talk to

my parents more. Getting more involved in my spiritual life also helped me greatly. My need to project a "bad girl" image did not define me anymore, and now I could just be Harmoni.

The first step is paying attention to the negative thoughts that go through your head and not just accepting them as the only truth. Then talk to someone, even if you think you nobody cares (they do). Spend time thinking about your future. Ask yourself if you really want to look back and regret the way you were to people just because you bottled up what you were feeling. Focus on a process to get comfortable with more positive thoughts, even if you have to fake it for a little bit!

I promise the change is worth the wait.

If you want to share your story of personal change, or how you work to overcome negativdent email at harmoni.guerrero@students.nisd.net, and we will work with you to help share your story.

SPORTS SHORTS



SWIM Fastest Boy's Sprint Relay in NISD Freshman Michael Gonzalez emerges from the water at the finsih, making his contribution to the swim team's efforts at the meet.



TENNIS Fall Season District Record: 2 W - 9 L Sophomore Emma Degenhardt admires her beautifully hit ball, hoping to win the point in a back and forth match.



CROSS COUNTRY Michael Herrera advances to Regionals Junior Jasmine Hinojosa strides up the hill in perfect form as she makes her way to handoff the baton to her anxiously awaiting teammate.



VARSITY VOLLEYBALL Season Record: 19 W - 20 L

Junior Nadia Flores dives for the dig of the spiked ball as senior Victoria Wilborn backs her up, preserving the chance for the team to score against the Stevens Falcons. The team improved their season record by two wins this year.



VARSITY FOOTBALL Season Record: 0 W - 10 L

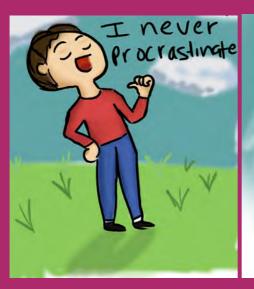
Senior linebackers Philip Urias and Pablo Rodriguez share a moment of mutual appreciation together during their last game as Huskies after four years playing as teammates.







COMIC RELIEF



"I DON'T PROCRAS--"



written and illustrated by Lucille Gradillas

SHOUT OUT

The "shout out" section is dedicated to those making a positive impact on our campus, whether it be students, faculty, or organizations.

We appreciate your time and dedication to making our school a better place. In this issue we would like to shoutout:

Joshua Bensen -For being a great athlete and always bringing a positive and uplifting vibe wherever he goes.

The **Gifted and Talented program** -For always working as a team to give back to our community.

Mr. Hamric -For offering exceptional help to his students and going out of his way to make sure each one of them comprehends the content he delivers.