



# SETTING UP FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS

# Setting Up for College Success



**Middle Georgia**  
State University

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## Preface

**Dr. Monica Miller**

The essays in this book were all written by students in my Honors English 1101 class during Fall 2024. Our class had the central theme of "Setting Up for College Success," and students researched strategies to become more successful in college, including wide-ranging topics such as time management, physical exercise, and even sleep. The result of that research is this wonderful collection of research essays.

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## **Pets: College Students Best Friends**

### **Isaiah DeWitt**

According to a recent study, 88.4% of college students have reported feeling high levels of anxiety (Asif et al.). There have also been similar levels of stress and depression reported throughout the nation. With this crisis that is sweeping through the minds of college students, there needs to be a way for them to help decrease these feelings. Luckily there is a solution, studies have shown that animals can help reduce these feelings. Either having a pet or being around an animal will help college students cope with the mental strains of college life.

Recent studies have shown that there is a direct link between animals and the mental and emotional health of humans. Being exposed to animal and natural stimuli can help with, "better health and well-being outcomes, including affect and mood" (Johnson 3). In a society where mental health issues are becoming more of a concern for the general population, this is groundbreaking research. There have also been studies that show there is a strong attachment between humans and animals. In her research, Johanna Lass-Hennemann found that some owners formed stronger attachments to their pets than to their families (2). While it is common knowledge that some relationships can be mentally unhealthy, for the most part, attachments with animals are healthy. Overall, the research conducted on human-animal relationships has shown positive results for mental and emotional health.

As mental health awareness grows, and more tests and studies are conducted on the population, a large group of people stands out with having poor mental health. This is a group of the population that can benefit from these positive animal stimuli.

Unfortunately, college students experience some of the worst mental health overall. There are hundreds of factors that go into the reason why college students have poor mental health and the risk and reason can even change from major to major; however, the fact remains that poor mental health runs rampant.

One of the ways that a pet can help students is for pets to act as an end goal. This may sound weird; however, in her article Elizabeth Johnson says that “companion animals have infantile-like features... a key structure of the mesocorticolimbic system that is linked to the anticipation of a reward” (3). While working, a student could be more productive and less stressed by spending time with their pet as an end goal. Because spending time with a pet has the same feeling as getting a reward, this can be used in place of, say, a sweet snack. Having this end goal will help not only to get the work done on time but also to set up an overall structure for the day.

Another way that pets will help contribute to college life, is to help students become more productive when it comes to college work. Generally, when it comes to any type of work, having a positive mentality and a healthy mind will help to be more productive, and allow a student to present their best work. Because pets help promote a healthy mind, it would only make sense that generally when students are around an animal they will perform better. So having an animal in the vicinity of the student will allow them to easily experience that positive animal stimuli. Thus, owning any type of pet, or doing work in say an animal therapy room, will allow them to work at their best.

There are some drawbacks to college students keeping pets in general, though. One of the major obstacles is the fact that most colleges do not allow animals and the animals that they do allow have to be either Service Animals or Emotional Support Animals. This general rule that colleges have is not unreasonable. Colleges want to keep their dormitories and campuses clean, and there is also the issue of improperly trained animals, and students will have allergies that are affected by the presence of animals. There is also the fact that some college students are not in the position, financially, to care for a pet properly. With these points in mind, it is perfectly reasonable to not allow pets, or want pets, on campus.

However, accommodations can be made for students who desire or need pets during their college experience. As stated before, animals help with the overall emotional and mental health of humans. With the ability to help cope with the mental turmoil that college brings, it only makes sense to bring along a furry companion. Colleges could always set aside dorms, or housing that is geared toward pets, to a certain extent. There would have to be heavy restrictions when it comes to what pets, and how many pets are allowed. There is also the option that Christine Kivlen, an assistant professor at Wayne State University, sheds light on which is to offer animal therapy sessions. This option would allow colleges to keep their tight restrictions on dormitories, while still allowing for positive animal stimuli (Kivlen). This easing up of college policy will most definitely allow for greater mental and emotional health among college students.

88.4 percent is a high number for any sort of mental burden (Asif et al.). However, all types of animals have been shown to help reduce these mental burdens. From stressful test days to demanding social lives, animals help to make it easy. It has been proven over and over that owning or being around an animal will indeed help with the mental burdens of college life.

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# Learning Improvement for College Success

## Oliver Clance

Oftentimes, students have false confidence in their ability to retain important information. Some of these students may think that their way of learning works, while others may know that they need to change their way of studying, but not know what to do. Thankfully, there are several ways that someone can improve their learning ability. A common mistake many students make is cramming before a test or procrastinating a big project right before it's due. This is undoubtedly one of the most negatively influential habits that stunt performance and accuracy. By using simple psychology and biology, the practice of overloading the temporary working memory can be altered into stretching the capacity of the permanent long-term memory. In order to maximize their efficiency, college students should find learning strategies that best help them in order to become as successful as they can.

The biological sections of the brain are just as important to learning as the psychological process. In short, the learning process goes through the entire brain in order to form a memory; frontal lobes for conscious thinking and most major processing, parietal for paying attention and processing sounds, occipital for interpreting and remembering visual information, and the temporal lobe for interpreting and remembering auditory information while also playing a large role in forming long term memories (Dembo and Seli, 75). Using an example of a civics lecture, a student receives information via the parietal lobe. In the parietal lobe, the instructor's words are processed and sent into the temporal lobe where they are interpreted as information needed to store. First, this information is hanging in the working memory, or the short-term moments later (Dembo and Seli, 81).

A common problem with learning in the classroom is the failure to truly retain as much information as we think we are. Since information only stays in the WM for a few seconds, and new information is constantly being processed, our brain needs more than simply receiving information in order to truly remember it. As Dembo and Seli point out, "New information coming into WM will, if it catches the attention of the student, tend to crowd out old information already there" (Dembo and Seli, 82). Unless attended-to information holds weight or significance to the brain, it will slip from the WM in only a few seconds. This is why we generally won't be able to recall most information introduced, as it was never really learned. Retaining and recalling information easily means it was learned, being unable to recall information means it never got stored. Many students struggle with truly giving meaning to what they study, opting, instead, to repeating or rewriting something to engrain it.

Moving information into the LTM only takes a simple change in strategy. Taking notes, mentally repeating, and creating a mnemonic device are three ways to extend the life of one's WM, since the information is being used for something and won't be able to be forgotten. Although, even these aren't enough to fully transfer it into the LTM. To make lecture topics, important directions, or reading sections easily accessible to the learner, "it must be elaborated upon and connected to information already in LTM in order to be effectively retrieved and used at a later time" (Dembo and Seli, 85). Effectively associating new information with old information ensures that it is properly stored and able to be recalled at a later time. Consider taking notes on a reading section; reading the words and knowing the meaning is one thing, but reading the words and visualizing what those words mean in regard to the text concretes their meaning into the brain. Writing those notes down further moves the information into LTM by the physical action of writing what is deemed as important.

Memory and learning are skills students should seek to improve whether they struggle to keep passing grades or not. As Dembo and Seli point out, "...we recommend a focus on acquiring learning strategies that will enhance your performance regardless of your learning preferences" (Dembo and Seli, 76). In further reading, the focus on how someone learns can exponentially impact their academic achievement. They can find a way to learn and retain information that makes it easier to recall that information for future reference; hence, improving test scores or contributing to a group project. When students improve these skills, they may find their overall happiness increased with each high grade that matches the effort put into preparation. On the contrary, students that put a lot of effort into preparing for an exam or quiz—yet cannot recall half the information studied—may experience feelings of dread or anxiety. They may not feel adequate enough in that subject because they have a learning strategy that doesn't work for them. This student, however, can put in the same amount of effort with a different method and get a much different score.

Some students claim to have forgotten important information, but it's more likely it was never fully processed to begin with. Dembo and Seli further explain that "unless special attempts are made to attend to and record information...material in lectures and textbooks is never stored in memory" (Dembo and Seli, 82). The working memory only holds onto information for a short amount of time before it is either forgotten, retained via repetition, or moved into Long Term Memory. This is explained further: "The WM is limited in...capacity and duration. At any one time, the WM of an adult can hold only five to nine chunks of information" (Dembo and Seli, 82). By exercising ways to retain more information in LTM, students can more easily recall that information and make use of it. That way, they don't face the anxiety of the possible low grade due to putting the wrong kind of effort into preparation.

Three different ways of retaining information have proven to be most useful. Dembo and Seli report the strategies of rehearsal—the act of using note cards to learn definitions of terms, elaboration—the act of relating new concepts to those already known, and organizational—the act of separating main points from examples and explanations when reading, to be the most effective in improving learning ability (Dembo and Seli, 90). Each of these strategies have different levels of aid for different people; while one may find simply rehearsing information to help, another may find it more efficient to organize the information. From a personal perspective, I find it most beneficial to elaborate new information. Using elaboration, it creates a remind-chain of new information triggering the recall of older information and vice versa. That way, when taking an exam or answering questions in class, specific words or topics that are already known trigger new information and make it easier to confidently respond.

While rehearsal is recognized as the least effective of the three, both elaboration and organization prove to be best paired together. In summary of Motivation and Learning Strategies for College Success; A Focus on Self-regulation, Dembo and Seli state, “Elaboration increases learning by linking new content to existing knowledge...Organizational learning strategies promote learning by imposing order on new content...How information is organized and elaborated influences one’s ability to retrieve it when needed” (Dembo and Seli, 97). By organizing information into easily-managed topics or sections, the brain can easily retain the information. In the retention process, the organization makes elaboration easier. Having a smaller amount of information to think about and consciously connect to pre-existing knowledge helps keep everything new from getting confusing and being forgotten to do information overload.

Some objections to this idea of learning improvement include the possibility of the mentioned strategies being unable to help someone become more successful. To this, I bring a different approach: the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance. An international study of students states “that positive self-esteem can lead to high academic self-efficacy, and that academic self-esteem is related to academic achievement” (Afari E., Graeme Ward, Myint Swe Khine, 54). If someone were to change their attitude towards learning to have a more positive outlook, they may find themselves better able to adopt a new way of learning. This isn’t to say one has a particularly negative outlook, it is to say that it’s common to feel dread, frustration, and anxiety when learning new things. These feelings can even appear when simply changing the way information is introduced to the brain.

Viewing the change as a challenge or experiment rather than a threat to their performance can drastically change the outcome. Afari, Ward, and Khine further explain by stating, "Since self-efficacy and academic achievement are significantly related, changes in one variable are likely to lead to changes in the other" (Afari, Ward, and Khine, 54). Using the civics exam example again, say the student is already confident in their ability to study and retain information without these strategies but they still feel they could do better. In the case of doubting these different ways of learning, they might change their outlook to see them as a trial to see how it affects their learning. College success can be noticeably improved via taking advantage of how the brain processes and retains information. Using the mental and physical ways the brain functions, as well as taking a different approach to learning or studying, college students can improve their academic performance without the anxiety of cramming for classes. College success seems like a difficult thing to achieve, but it's quite simple—just find a different approach and take it. It might be just the change someone needs to improve their performance.

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# Social Media is a No No!

**Chloe Moultrie**

Social media is tremendously popular in today's world. According to The Breeze, "Over 98% of college-aged students are on social media" (Zedd). While walking around my college campus, I observe many students staring down at their phones. Many teenagers are obsessed with TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchatting. I cannot blame them; social media most definitely has its benefits. It is how many students keep in touch with their friends and families, stay connected to what is happening in the world, make online friends, and keep up with events for their favorite celebrities. However, social media has many negative effects, especially for college students. Social media can be so addicting that it can lead to procrastinating homework and studying. I have first-hand experience with this. Every day, I spend more than seven hours on social media, and I always leave feeling anxious and worse about myself. It also prolongs my procrastination because 20 minutes on social media turns into hours. Hence, college students should abstain from using social media on weekdays because it can lead to procrastination, distraction, and cyberbullying.

The rise of technology and the internet has become more addicting than ever. College students have several online entertainment options, such as podcasts, music streaming services, video games, movies, online shopping, and social media platforms. College students' most used social media apps are Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. According to Thumbwind, "college students spend an average of 17 hours per week on social media "(Austin). Another study from Boostmeup states that college students spend an average of 3-5 daily hours on these social media platforms (Panda). We waste our waking hours scrolling on these apps instead of studying and doing homework. Even if we intend to stay on social media for a few minutes, the design of these apps is to keep you engaged. The notifications, likes, posts, and comments can be tempting to check constantly, but ultimately, they cost us our grades and emotional well-being.

One reason social media harms college students is that it prolongs procrastination. According to the National Library of Medicine, "People can be distracted by notifications that they receive while working, encouraging checking and then procrastination, especially for those who have low self-control" (Alblwi et al.). As a result, the temporary satisfaction they get from scrolling on social media leads to long-term effects such as poor academic performance due to missed deadlines. Therefore, students should block their social media apps on all devices so they will be able to continue their work.

Furthermore, social media causes distraction among college students because of the likes, notifications, and comments designed to keep students occupied. The National Library of Medicine points out, "the design features of social networking sites (SNS) could facilitate procrastination in numerous cases such as users who instantly reply to messages to develop a positive self-image or because of the fear of missing out" (Alblwi et al.). So, college students who are more vulnerable to peer pressure and the fear of missing out can lead to a prolonged social media addiction.

In addition to distraction, cyberbullying is an effect of persistent social media use. According to the Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology, "a range of 48%-57% undergraduates have been bullied through various cyber media and between 20%-50% of adolescents have been victims of peer aggression by electronic means at some time" (Nwosu 4). Cyberbullying can lead to low self-esteem, depression, and, sadly, suicidal thoughts. Consequently, college students should stay off all social media platforms to avoid getting bullied and feeling horrible about themselves.

I understand that my argument is controversial. Some college students may argue that they use social media, such as YouTube, to go to sleep. Since calm meditation music can help better your sleep and academic performance, I recommend using YouTube an hour before bed and blocking access to other social media apps. A few college students may disagree with my argument by saying that they use social media to keep up with friends. However, there are several other ways to maintain friendships, like through text messages, calls, and emails.

All in all, college students continuing to use social media daily may lead to low self-worth, poor mental health, neglect of needs such as eating and sleeping, being more prone to get cyberbullied, as well as procrastinating school work, and, as a result, doing poorly in school. Although social media does have its advantages, like keeping up with friends, there are alternatives to that. Instead of using social media, college students can keep in touch with friends through text and call. It will be hard to break a bad habit you do regularly, but it will be worth it with self-discipline and determination. Your college career and future are what is at stake here.

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# Screen Time and Its Negative Impact on College Students

## Sarah Alphonse

College students in the modern world of technology know the struggle of finding the balance between screen time and social interactions. Since the pandemic, we have been placed in a position to conform to the growing age of technology because it's now used a lot more in curriculums. All across college campuses, we can see students glued to their computers, cell phone devices, and gaming consoles. Having to complete assignments and stay in touch with family and friends back home, it's easy to overlook just how much time, on average, we spend each day on our devices. College students should limit their screen time to see improvements in their learning and memory in order to be more successful in college.

Believe it or not, there was a time when devices were not used during classes. Online classes were for students outside of the physical classroom, not inside the classroom, but we have evolved from that. Now there are learning management systems that schools all across the states can use to post homework assignments, discussion forums, online quizzes and tests. The Texas Digital Association mentions that "digital learning continues to evolve with a focus on instructor effectiveness, learner engagement, and learner success" (Amour). This is to show the primary goal of online learning. Many classes use technology one way or another, whether they are online, blended, or hybrid, but are we really going to overlook its negative effects on students?

I strongly believe unlimited screen time can negatively impact college students' learning because of the many studies that prove it to be true. In "Should Professors Ban Laptops?", the authors mentioned after performing a study that "students in classrooms without internet-connected devices earned the highest average score of 72.9 percent. Students in classrooms where laptop and tablet usage was not restricted earned the lowest scores, on average, at 70.5 percent, a difference of 2.4 percentage points" (Carter et al.). This shows that it's easy to get distracted by devices during class lectures if one lacks self-control, which many people do. This causes many college students to not know where they need assistance to ask questions, eventually leaving them clueless on test days. Another example of this is mentioned in a psychological survey done by professors from the University of Toledo. They have found that "surface learning is related to PSU (problematic cell phone use) severity" (Rozgonjuk, Dmitri, et al). This shows the correlation between having no control over time being spent on electronics and how it hinders the real purpose of learning, which is to understand.

Memory is a core skill needed at a higher education level. Being able to memorize notes and what is taught effectively can positively impact one's learning experience and allow the individual to be more successful in the long run. Unlimited screen time can be detrimental to one's memory because it can produce feelings of depression, stress, and anxiety, which are triggers to the memory storage in the brain. Also, stress from these devices can cause the neurons in the brain to "become less responsive than usual. It becomes harder to make or recall memories with these resting neurons" (Swaim).

Critics will argue that screen time is a great tool to promote productivity. While that may be true depending on the individual, it is proven that most of the time they do the opposite. Researchers state that "these academic-related variables (surface learning, procrastination, and poor academic productivity) would be conceptualized as negative consequences in daily life from increased smartphone use" (Brand et al). People will also ask the question, "How much screen time do we limit to a healthy amount where college students can find the balance to improve their college success?" Well, there isn't one answer to this. It really comes down to the individual's routine and responsibilities. Professors claim that "milder levels offer more benefits than non-use, but excessive levels have adverse effects" (Montag & Walla). This means that using your devices with intention and as little as you can already offers great benefits and won't be harmful to the body.

Overall, unlimited screen time can negatively impact college students' learning and memory because it can lead individuals to neglect important obligations, which puts their learning and overall well-being in jeopardy. The consequence of not honing in on this advice is sleep deprivation, unproductivity, low test scores, and stress, all of which will not enhance one's college and academic experience. Limiting screen time use by setting strict boundaries (not using cell phone devices while studying except during breaks), shifting one's mindset towards work, and shutting off devices one hour before bed can all lead to many positive outcomes, both physically, emotionally, and mentally. This is important to keep in mind, for it will not only benefit you presently but in the future as well. There's a famous quote by Edward Hallowell, a child and adult psychiatrist, that says, "We may have to exercise discipline to use the controls we have, but we are not slaves to these devices unless we allow ourselves to become so" (Blog). In other words, the power to better your academic success is in your hands.

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## A Shift in Mindset

### Baylee Barton

As I stand in front of the entire school shaking, my teacher waits patiently for me to begin my scene. "Oh, wait! Did I mention this was for twenty percent of your grade?" He had, in fact, not mentioned that this school-wide debate that I was having to host would be so important. I was incredibly anxious and it was only getting worse, until I decided that I just needed a shift in my mindset about this opportunity. According to Lerner and Schlechter's book *Uthrive*, "85 percent of college students report feeling stressed every day," (Lerner and Schlechter 152). While there are a multitude of reasons for college students to feel stressed, school is one of the biggest. To handle their stress, college students need to ditch the nervous mindset and adopt an excited mindset.

While this seems like it could be a hard thing to do, changing your mindset could be as simple as shifting the stress. For example, in *Uthrive*, Lerner and Schlechter mention a study conducted by Jeremy Jamieson, a psychologist at Harvard. In this study, he has a control group and then gives the other group an encouraging paragraph to read ahead of time. This paragraph essentially explains how being anxious is not harmful to taking a test but could be rather beneficial instead. As a result of the encouragement that being worried is not a bad thing, the second group performed better (Lerner and Schlechter 161). In my personal experience, being stressed about a test makes the test even harder because I am so focused on the test being hard. Instead, the focus should be shifted off the stress and focused on the actual task at hand. In these scenarios, the stress will still be there, but instead of being your primary focus, it is left in the back of your head as a problem for another day. In these scenarios, most of the time the stress goes away when the task is complete and is nowhere near as big of a deal as it seemed.

Another way to change your mindset would be changing the words you use. The words around us have a really big impact on the way that we go about things.

For example, when I tell myself I am going to fail something despite preparing really hard for it, I shoot myself in the foot. If I change my words and say that I am going to do the best I can, I often perform better because I am focused on doing better and am not focused on the possibility of me failing. Lerner and Schlechter support this idea that telling yourself to calm down only makes you stress more. Harvard professor Alison Wood Brooks performed a study with college students doing karaoke.

She had one group say they were anxious, one say they were excited, and one group that said nothing. The group that said "I am anxious" scored 16 percent below the control and 28 percent below the group who said they were excited (Lerner and Schlecter 162). The difference in anxiety between the groups in the beginning were all about the same, but by using different words to channel their energy to a different feeling, the results prove that if you control the stressors, you can have a better performance.

After a quick and easy warmup circle, my feelings of stress quickly turned into excitement. The worry about the grade I would make easily melted off my back, and I was looking forward to the debate more than ever. It was best said by Lerner and Schlecter that "stress is not the problem... it is how you deal with it that might be tripping you up" (Lerner and Schlecter 152). A shift in mindset is very beneficial and easy step to college students trying to handle their stress.

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# Shake a Leg & Boost Your Brain: Why Exercise is Essential for College Students

**Stacy Boles**

Caffeine-fueled late-night study sessions, spirited extracurriculars, and memorable escapades with friends epitomize the life of a college student. However, these activities often demand priority over a student's free time, and the importance of being physically active is often quickly overlooked. What is also forgotten is that college is a four-year-long process, and thus can be looked at as an academic marathon. Just like a runner who stays hydrated during a marathon, students can increase their chances of academic success by regularly including exercise in their weekly routines.

The journey to a completed degree often takes a toll on both our mental and physical health if we don't take steps to manage our health along the way. This is where regular exercise is so important. But although we often hear that exercise is good for us, we don't always hear how exercise can help us to achieve our goals of being academically successful. I don't think anyone would argue with me if I said that a healthy brain is crucial for academic success. But would you be surprised if I said that regular physical activity could help you become smarter?

Daniel Lerner and Alan Schlechter, M.D. are two authors who have spent portions of their careers learning about how to help students be successful. They published their book *UThrive: How to Succeed in College (and Life)*, and they make a good point about physical activity.

The benefits of moving are innately understood by children: it makes them feel good, it is how they learn, and although they have no awareness of this, it is helping their brains develop. These benefits don't stop when we hit puberty, when we get to college, or when we start collecting Social Security.

Indeed, one study of older adults set out to determine the effects of regular moderate exercise on the hippocampus. Researchers found that not only did regular exercise increase the size of the hippocampus after completion of a year of moderate exercise, but also found that those in the control group who had a higher fitness level at the start of the study showed less deterioration of their hippocampus over the course of the year (Erickson).

This revelation that the brain may be protected by physical activity was not a complete surprise for these researchers. The protective effect that physical activity has on the brain was already well-documented in other studies these researchers had read before (Erickson). Known as brain-derived neurotrophic factors (BDNF), these proteins play a vital role in the reproduction, regeneration, and protection of nerve cells. They are essential for maintaining the brain's neuroplasticity, or the ability of the brain to wire and rewire its pathways. And a positive correlation between physical activity and increased BDNF's has been found in Rats, Mice and Humans (Liou).

Now you might be thinking that is all just fine, but you hate exercising, or you never have enough time in the day to exercise! But there are other ways to include physical activity in your week that don't involve the gym. While moderate exercise for 30 minutes a day seems to be the sweet spot for helping both your brain and your GPA (Al-Drees). Researchers conducted a study on elementary school children with ADHD to explore the potential effects of yoga on the brain. These children were assigned to an 8-week program and participated in two 40-minute yoga classes each week. At the end of the study, researchers saw marked improvement in post-study tests of both attention and information processing. We have all heard that yoga is good for you, but I believe 'You', my fellow college student can relate to the desire for a longer attention span, and for the ability to grasp more information. And maybe that desire to be just a little bit better is enough motivation for you to shake a leg and get moving.

Remember, the next time you're planning out your week, don't forget to schedule some time for some physical activity. It will not only help you feel better, but it will help you learn better. And your hippocampus will thank you too. And don't forget that even if you don't want to hit the gym or the sport field this week, maybe 30 minutes in a quiet room doing yoga is all you need.



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# Mindful Mentality

## Helen Settle

As a college student, I have found that maintaining my mental health can be a struggle. Between juggling both an academic and social life, mental health maintenance can easily slip through the cracks. The University of Michigan News wrote that “44% of students reported symptoms of depression, 37% reported anxiety disorders, and 15% reported having seriously considered suicide” (Kim North Shrine). Moreover, the CU Denver News reported that a study conducted by the American College Health Association (ACHA) stated that “more than 60 percent of college students said they experienced overwhelming anxiety” (Rishita Chandra). Mental health often gets pushed aside in the everyday rush, and as a result neglected. But what can we do to fix it? How can college students fit their mental health maintenance into their busy schedules? College students should practice yoga daily to improve their mental health.

First of all, what is yoga? According to the CU Denver News, “yoga is a physical, mental, and spiritual practice, which includes the practice of yama (personal ethics), niyama (social ethics), asana (physical postures), pranayama (breathing exercises), and meditation (science of relaxing the mind)” (Rishita Chandra). In an article published by the National Library of Medicine, author Catherine Woodyard lists the numerous health benefits that yoga provides; such as increased flexibility, increased blood flow, builds muscle mass, reduces joint pain, and increases cardiovascular health (Catherine Woodyard). We now know that yoga is extremely beneficial towards increasing physical health, however why should college students practice yoga to boost their mental health. Why yoga?

Studies have shown that practicing yoga is a great way to improve mental health. In a study conducted at Eastern Connecticut State University, "115 students were studied in either yoga or health education classes. The students would either participate in a yoga class 3 times a week, or a personal health class 7 times a week" (Lucinda Weiss).

Although students participating in the personal health classes reported no significant changes, the students who practiced yoga "self-reported lower anxiety and perceived stress scores by the completion of the course" (Lucinda Weiss). To add to that, an article published by CU Denver News wrote that practicing yoga could promote mindfulness, build self-confidence, help concentration, improve social development, and reduce stress (Rishita Chandra). But what does that mean? For example, how does practicing mindfulness affect one's mental health?

Included in the CU Denver News article, Rishita Chandra inserted a study conducted by the University of Bristol that found that "students who practiced mindfulness reduced their anxiety, excessive worry, and negative thought patterns" (Rishita Chandra). The practice of mindfulness through yoga is an excellent way to ward off the heavy baggage that anxiety drags into day-to-day life. Furthermore, reducing stress is important when tending to your mental health. Large quantities of stress can often cause nausea, fatigue, indigestion, and an elevated heart rate. Personally, I have dealt with all of those stress-related symptoms, and I can attest that it placed a mental block on the maintenance of my mental health. Yoga practice is a wonderful way to boost mental health by implementing mindfulness, reducing stress, and providing an inner calm.

To conclude, yoga practiced daily is an easy, simple way to increase mental health, and to decrease stress and anxiety amongst college students. As a college student, I understand how busy and stressful life gets. Between managing both an academic and social life, students can easily end up overwhelmed and exhausted. As a result, mental health usually gets left behind on the back burner. It is extremely important to maintain a healthy mental state, and it should not be neglected. Yoga is a great way to give back to our mental health. Just by practicing a short amount daily, yoga does so much to improve our bodies both physically and mentally. In conclusion, college students should practice yoga daily to improve their mental health.

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# The Power of Positive Psychology: How a Positive Mindset Can Benefit College Students' Learning Experience

**Abrianna Sanders**

Having the proper mindset affects our overall outlook on life, whether it be inside or outside of the classroom. As an undergraduate myself, I have had my fair share of disappointments due to my previously poor and negative outlook. In fact, apart from myself, there is an evident mindset epidemic on campuses that affects college students more than most people realize. In the article "Increasing Growth Mindset and Performance in the College Classroom," Niederjohn points out that, "Often students take standardized tests early in their schooling that place them in tracks that are fixed and also create expectations and ceilings for their performance. For these reasons and early on, students may develop self-beliefs and expectations about their abilities, which are limited by a fixed mindset." In this way, undergrads find themselves to be unknowingly conditioned into possessing a fixed, negative mindset that will only work against them in the long run. Additionally, so that undergrads might see improvement and make progress, each set of actions and perspectives without a doubt starts exclusively from within the individual first; as poor mindsets commonly lead to unsuccessful outcomes, optimistic mindsets lead to successful outcomes. College students should implement positive psychology in order to achieve academic success.

To begin, recognizing the problem is the first step to overcoming it. While falling into a decline of mental health is common, burn out can be avoided by self-assessing internal unresolved issues (as opposed to attempting to conceal them and further burden oneself). Constructive psychology techniques, in my opinion, should be incorporated into school life as an individual's outlook greatly influences their overall perspective on life. One of the most effective techniques to locate the obstacle blocking one's mental path is dispositional mindfulness. While mindfulness in itself refers to being present in the moment, dispositional mindfulness refers to exerting awareness involving one's thoughts and feelings within that present moment (similarly compared to introspection). This form of consciousness is typically observed throughout examinations, surveys, and questionnaires.

As discussed in "Dispositional Mindfulness and Adjustment to University," "Mindfulness, through living in the present moment and being accepting and nonjudgmental of experience, has been associated with decreased maladaptive coping styles, and increased ability to recover when faced with negative emotions" (Keng et al., 2016; Kadziolka, Di Pierdomenico, & Miller, 2016, p. 46). In support of the thoughts stated previously, recognizing the issues through conscious awareness increases recovery in relation to negative emotions. The constant spiral of concealed feelings that lead to emotional episodes of mental collapse could be virtually nonexistent if such approaches are carried out by college students. From the research provided in "Dispositional Mindfulness and Adjustment to University," "mindfulness was the strongest predictor of positive psychological well-being in university students compared with self-efficacy and social support from friends" (p. 48). Through the provided evidence and data regarding the positive psychological benefits that dispositional mindfulness can provide, college students should unquestionably apply this mediation to assist them on their paths to success.

Since the issues have been recognized, carrying out positive psychological interventions is vital for academic development and emotional growth. One way to implement positive psychology is through establishing a "growth mindset." As stated by Dr. Niederjohn in "Increasing Growth Mindset and Performance in the College Classroom," "The emphasis here is that mistakes and failures are how we learn, so if we approach them with that type of mindset we can expect to improve in time. With enough exposure, students can begin to look forward to this type of learning process in which learning from mistakes builds grit and perseverance." In direct relation to this quotation, students can improve their levels of academic performance throughout motivated perseverance. Niederjohn also argues that, "No one expects to be able to ride a bike successfully the first time, but with practice and learning from errors ultimately progress is made. This type of gradual improvement mindset can be developed through acceptance of early failure" (Increasing Growth Mindset and Performance in the College Classroom). By practicing perseverance and implementing the growth mindset, undergraduates can begin to feel empowered and intrinsically motivated to succeed. As a result of this evidence, we can determine that psychology is the single most important factor in regards to college academic performance.

Along with the numerous amounts of data to support my argument, many opposers can in any case contend that my case is doubtful and will not result in the scholastic success of each and every undergrad. Or, that other outside factors could be a variable that alters the results and outcomes of positive psychology interventions amongst students. However, I answer these conflicts by saying that improvement begins with self, and the main method for evolving yourself, is to get to know yourself. As found in "The Impact of Positive Psychology on Higher Education," "Positive psychology shifts the perspective away from student weaknesses toward recognizing student strengths, because accenting student weakness does nothing but hinder student motivation, which is an important component of student success" (p. 88). To further explain the context of this citation, improvement cannot be achieved through a static outlook, but through the implementations of positive psychology, undergrads are able to finally see success.

Taking everything into account, by deciding to acknowledge and reflect on our emotions as opposed to dismissing them, we no longer have to carry along the weight of both our emotional and mental states of mind. Numerous amounts of data and evidence suggest that positive psychology can significantly help college students, who in turn, may thrive from this increased awareness. As mindset indubitably influences an individual, the state in which it resides can either catapult them to prosperity, or sink them further into an isolated pit of failure. In order for undergrads to achieve scholarly success, it is important for them to apply positive psychology into their mindsets; as it not only prompts towards an expansion in academic execution, but will affect their viewpoint on life all in all.

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