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Co., Inc., defines stress as: "the way your mind and body react to any situation that's new, threatening or exciting. Stress prepares you to act. The way you handle stress determines whether it is helpful or harmful."

During a recent interview in his office at the Career and Personal Counseling Center, which operates on a service exchange with St. Andrews, Director Dr. Robert Patton explained stress situations that college students face. He cited the freshman dilemma: they are away from home, some for the first time. They are in a different environment and have to make the adjustment process which includes the handling of freedom and financial responsibility." These once-sheltered freshmen, he said, have to learn a new role.

Freshmen are not alone in their periods of stress. Sophomores at their year's end must choose a required major and seniors graduating without definite plans go through a high stress time, he added.

Dr. Patton noted that incomplete work and professors "piling it on", make spring the most stressful time for students.

According to Dr. Patton, in the past two years the counseling load has increased one and a half times from 400 to 700 hours of counseling time. Students are seeking more outside help than ever before.

Late nights are not uncommon among most students at St. Andrews. Those who partake in this ritual usually gather together at one point in the evening and procrastinate.

One of these student groups recently discussed how they cope with stress. One junior, facing financial difficulties said, "I don't. I just pack up my room and attempt to leave." Her roommate also responded negatively, "I become introverted. I don't want to be bothered by anybody," she said.

A graduating senior said that his first attempt at coping is usually sleep, but in the end, he finds himself relying on drugs for relief. "It builds up so much that I turn to drugs. This is the easiest possible way to get away from it all, instantaneous relief," he said.

Another student during 'Ganza weekend, picked up the habit of smoking to deal with his academic stress. "I've got a lot to do in a little time. Sometimes I work all night and I need something to keep me awake when I take a break," the sophomore said.

A number of students noticed a pattern of sleeping more frequently while under pressure. "The more stress, the more sleep I get. I try to work harder to get rid of the problem so I won't sleep it off. I read a lot, too," said one student typing a possible stress potential, the dreaded term paper.

Some professors are aware of the effects that stress has on the schoolwork of students. Professor of history, Dr. Skip Clark, has noticed the change due to stress in some of his students. "I would say, in some cases, I can observe obvious stress by lack of attendance, missing deadlines, and when in class, by a student's closed posture or inward, body-pulling expressions," he said.

Test anxiety seems to be a major problem for most students. Tom Cox, in his book, *Stress* says students react to final exams as a "preparation against harm" because after months of study, the consequence of possible failure approaches. Cox lists three main negative coping techniques he has observed in students. The first is the student's denial of the importance of the exam, therefore reducing the impact of failure. Those students also like to find the company of other "deniers" and avoid their realistic friends. The second self-protection technique is to avoid the test by becoming physically ill, which

would transfer the responsibility to the sickness or the prescribing doctor. If they can't get sick, the third option is introduced: the walk-out and-leave-the-test syndrome.

One student noted that test anxiety hinders her from doing as well as she feels she is capable of. "You study so much to do your best, and if not, you did all you could. When test anxiety sets in, my nerves get the best of me and I do worse," she said.

Another student recognized her use of procrastination as a way of dealing with the inevitable papers and tests. "I procrastinate. When I realize that I can't get out of it, I panic awhile, and then sit down and do it," she admits.

Others tried to ignore the stress. "I blow everything off. I can't make myself get stressed out about things. It gives me a headache. It's not worth it," said one student.

Students aren't the only ones facing difficulties. Faculty and staff members also have their share of problems. June Milby, director of communications and marketing, went through a 10-year high stress period working for the Democratic Party and state government before arriving at St. Andrews. "Compared to other times in my life, I do not feel much anxiety. There are aspects of the job that are stressful, such as deadline pressures, perfection sacrificed for speed, and some inconsideration by other people," she said.

While some students admit to consuming alcohol to release tension, Ms. Milby feels it hinders more than it helps the problem. "When under stress one time, I tried having a drink to relax, but it made it worse. I found new things to be stressed about."

Her assistant, Mark Powell, also agrees that deadline pressure constitutes stress. He says his stress comes out in the form of headaches, elevated blood pressure and tiredness. "Different things get different responses. I try to balance



myself," he said.

A July, '83 issue of Science News reported that the level of the bacteria-fighting antibody found in saliva, secretory immunoglobulin A, is lower during periods of stress. Dental students were tested around final exams for the antibody. The levels were lower than when they were in less stressful situations. Researchers claim that this proves the age-old theory that stress lowers the ability to fight infection by "temporarily inhibiting some facets of the immune system."

Dr. Patton confirmed the fact that stress affects the person physically, as well as psychologically. "There is a definite correlation between the two. When you go through a lot of stress, it affects you physically. You must take the wellness approach as a balance to life," he said.

That wellness approach to life he sees as a square, with each side consisting of work, play, physical well-being, and spiritual well-being.

With all this stress affecting our lives, how are we supposed to cope? Dr. Patton suggested a few helpful outlets for

relief. "You get so close to the trees but can't see the forest. You need a support base consisting of a close or objective friend or faculty member. Those in a depressed state focus internally. To overcome this, you need to focus outside yourself. This requires expending energy in the form of jogging, racquetball, or something similar," he said.

"When you do nothing, depression deepens. It turns into apathy and lack of energy. A way to get out of this is with aesthetics. Music and emotions are so closely related. Try painting or watching a sunset," he added.

Ms. Milby suggests prayer as another alternative. "Now that I do it, I feel more in touch with human beings as well as God. I let Him handle it."

Dr. Clark finds reading escape fiction, such as science fiction and spy novels, helps him deal with pressures. "Or I look through my telescope. I find the stars soothing," he joked.

On the positive side of stress that can be helpful, June Milby comments, "A certain degree of stress can be helpful, if you make it positive. By coping gracefully and making it a lesson in life, you can find the key to dealing with it. The more you do to run from stress, the more stress you create, and are less likely to learn from it."

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