



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID KOEHLER | PHOTOGRAPHY

# STRESS:

## How to cope when anxiety strikes

Daniel Koehler  
Reporter

On the outside, it's just an ordinary sketchpad. But on the inside, it's an Elon student's journal, a rare glimpse into someone's raw and uncensored emotions. The entries etched on well-worn pages with triumph, deplore defeat and, of course, lament stress. One page in particular is marked by hurried pen strokes and fiery, staccato sentences.

"I have too many things to do and not nearly enough time to do them," the entry begins. "The 20-page research proposal. The astronomy midterm. The service-learning journals. The perpetual readings due every day. Opera workshop, voice lessons and 'Messiah' in Camerata. Working 11 hours a week. And retaining friends and acquaintances. And staying connected to my family. And never having time to go to the gym. Later this evening, I got a rather nasty e-mail. I cried."

As this cathartic account attests, college students are especially susceptible to stress' evils. They bear the often overwhelming burden of balancing academics, social life and extracurricular activities. According to Bruce Nelson, director of Elon's Counseling Services, 10 to 12 percent of the student body sees counseling staff. Of these, he said, a majority have stress-related symptoms. Stress is a given. But what happens when it heads your way?

"The first thing that goes is my health," sophomore Kiva Nice-Webb said. "Exercise, then eating, then sleeping. Then my relationships will suffer. Then I'll start to prioritize my classes and my organizations. Then I'll stop being ahead in my work and, God forbid, behind. It's a downward spiral."

Others experience stress' effects differently. "I eat lots of food," said freshman David Muñoz as he grabbed another handful of almonds. "I exercise, too. I sort of pretend I have nothing to do. More or less, I try to find a means of distraction or escape."

While satisfying an increased appetite might be one stress-related symptom, there exists a whole slew of physical, emotional and behavioral indications associated with stress, including fatigue, irritability and procrastination. According to Jana Lynn Patterson, vice president for student life, students may even turn to alcohol and drugs. Luckily, stress and its symptoms often come in waves, affording periods of respite. Sometimes, though, stress is not so forgiving.

"Chronic stress has been associated with numerous medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, ulcers, compromised immune system functioning and most likely makes us more vulnerable to a variety of illnesses," Nelson said. "If someone remains stressed too long, the result may be increased depression and anxiety, or a combination of both. Approximately 85 percent of the students who come in for counseling have some mixed symptoms of depression and anxiety."

There's no use denying it: stress compromises personal well-being. But that doesn't mean you're destined to a life of perpetual anxiety and unhealthiness. Instead, healthy coping tactics can be used to beat back stress. But not everyone knows these tactics. In fact, many students engage in unhealthy behaviors that actually worsen the situation.

"Putting stuff off is definitely not healthy," senior Zack Smith said. "Instead of making me feel relaxed, it actually makes me feel more anxious and overwhelmed, as I am only making it harder for (myself) to get stuff done on time. Essentially, this just makes me more stressed than I was before."

Like Smith, many students fear the snowball effect, the downward spiral of doom — a constant, gnawing, ever-growing stress. But with the proper coping techniques, fear and anxiety can morph into confidence. According to Nelson, it's a matter of finding a healthy activity best suited to your personality, whether that be exercising or writing in

a journal. Patterson, who has mentored overwhelmed students in the past, warns against overcommitting. "Be willing and prepared to say 'no' to distractions or activities which may not be conducive to your meeting your goals," she said.

Nelson and Patterson advise students to discuss their stress and anxiety with a trusted friend, mentor or family member. Students agree an outlet like this is invaluable.

"I think talking to people is really healthy for me because that's when I talk about really personal or conflicting issues," sophomore Jana Murdock said. "It's a good method for me to sort things out and reduce my stress."

Still, sometimes these coping mechanisms don't work. In situations like these, the staff at Elon's counseling service can offer further help.

Nelson gives a final word of encouragement. "The good news," he says, "is that most of us are more resilient than we might think."

Though it may sometimes seem like it, the world is not going to fall apart.

### STRESSED OUT? Try these healthy coping tips

- Exercise
- Take a walk
- Write in a journal
- See a funny movie
- Don't take yourself too seriously
- Break large tasks into smaller steps
- Work downtime into your busy schedule
- Be more patient with yourself and others

# Check it Out At Lighthouse

Wednesday, April 29

DJ Night

Thursday, April 30

Mug Night & Karaoke

Friday, May 1

SUB Spring Show After-Party  
featuring  
Anonymous at 11pm

Check us out at <http://org.elon.edu/lighthouse/>



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## PHI KAPPA PHI

### CONGRATULATIONS!

The Elon University chapter of Phi Kappa Phi would like to congratulate the following new initiates who were selected to membership from the upper 7.5% of the junior class and upper 10% of the senior and graduate classes. These students were recognized at an induction ceremony on April 22<sup>nd</sup> for their achievements. Chapter President Dr. Donna Van Bodegraven gave the opening remarks and Dean of the Elon College of Arts and Sciences Dr. Steven House delivered the address.

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| <p><b>GRADUATE STUDENTS</b></p> <p>Maxine Cassells<br/>Helen Crompton<br/>Alison M. Dancy<br/>Rob A. Elbitar<br/>Michelle Elysia Feiser<br/>Thomas E. Flood<br/>Christine Marie Brown Flowe<br/>Miranda Rose Guyton<br/>Anneliese Marie Lowman<br/>Dawn P. Messinger<br/>Victor Wayne Moran<br/>Angela Wagner O'Daniel<br/>Roger Gann Page<br/>Erin Michelle Sanders<br/>Caroline Bowen Thutt<br/>Tracy Diane Walker Williams</p> | <p>Kimberly Brooke Duggins<br/>Alexandra Marie Dunn<br/>Lindsay Joanne Eversole<br/>Kaitlyn Anne Fay<br/>Rachael Ann Fine<br/>Erin Christine Fitzgerald<br/>Jessica L. Flammer<br/>Rebecca Diane Fogle<br/>Katrina Jane Folsom<br/>Alexandra L. Ford<br/>Taylor Noel Foshee<br/>Sarah Catherine Foushee<br/>Stephanie Ann Franz<br/>Sabine Martina Gempel<br/>Erica Lee Gierlach<br/>Abbe C. Golding<br/>Benjamin Carey Goodwin<br/>Emily Elizabeth Henderson<br/>Scott Clifton Hockemeyer<br/>Ahren Hoy<br/>Jessica Marie Hoyle<br/>Victoria Claire James<br/>Christopher Carleton Jarrett<br/>Sarah Calhoun Jenny<br/>Eva Christine Jorgensen-Graham<br/>Caitlyn Juengel<br/>Megan Nicole Justice<br/>Jennifer Michelle Kennedy<br/>Amanda Danielle Kennison<br/>Elisabeth Paige Kensrue<br/>Amanda Lee Ketner<br/>Michael Ralph Kleinmann<br/>Tess Lockhart Kukovich<br/>Carolyn M. Kurtz<br/>Katherine Elizabeth Lampe<br/>Heather Rose Laskin<br/>Stacy Elizabeth Laue<br/>David James Lawton<br/>Evin Rose Lipman<br/>Andrea Lee March<br/>Stacey Allison Markham<br/>Roxanne May Mauck<br/>Amanda Annette McBride<br/>John Ryan McGreevy<br/>Jordan McNeill<br/>Valery C. Menard</p> | <p>Katherine Leigh Meyer<br/>Alexandra Milan<br/>Kelly Rebecca Molin<br/>Natalie Jeanne Moore<br/>Stephen E. Murray<br/>Michelle Caroline Newman<br/>Anne K. Nicholson<br/>Andrea Lynn Noel<br/>Amanda Olmstead<br/>Caroline Marie Peckels<br/>Rachel Marisa Perlman<br/>Rachel Marie Perron<br/>Monica D. Poteat<br/>Susan Angela Ramer<br/>Caitlin Arica Rantala<br/>Nichole Marie Rawlings<br/>Tyler Stephens Reese<br/>Emily Elizabeth Rice<br/>Sara Elizabeth Riek<br/>Lindsay Ann Ring<br/>Erica N. Rossi<br/>Matthew Paul Ruff<br/>Natalie Sayag<br/>Brett Robert Scuiletti<br/>Patricia Michele Serdy<br/>Hilary Jeanette Sheets<br/>Joseph Allen Simmons<br/>McNeill Smart<br/>Christine Rachel Smith<br/>Heather Nichole Smith<br/>Kinsey Nicole Spencer<br/>Avra Weisberg Stackpole<br/>Amanda R. Stamplis<br/>Molly Shannon Strayer<br/>Andrew T. Sturm<br/>Kevin A. Sweet<br/>Hollis Lynn Theard<br/>Alex Michael Trevisan<br/>Suzanne Ashley Uliano<br/>Arwen Varner<br/>Gregory Alexander Walton<br/>Laura Beth Ward<br/>Amanda Brittany Wilson<br/>Clayton Winkelvoss</p> |
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