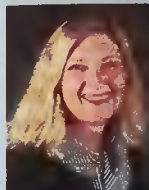


The Pendulum is renewing its efforts to serve as a voice of the Elon University community. Each week, this space will feature a column from a member of the community. Want to participate? Contact us at pendulum@elon.edu.

Embrace change, discomfort during final days at Elon

Over my years of chaplaincy I've noticed a trend among seniors. I think that sharing my observations will help you to place yourself in these strenuous days.



Jan Fuller
University Chaplain

In the spring of the senior year, and every now and then in the late fall, when you hoped you'd have your best times of all, things tend to fall apart. Relationships — with people you've depended on for years, people you love, someone you've never argued with — suddenly fall apart or become excruciating, limiting, annoying or meaningless.

Behaviors change suddenly. You may decide to become a vegan, to dump your former plans and do something wild, engage in behavior unlike your usual style. What used to be inspiring, worthy, golden, fun may become dull and empty. The world feels strange, you may not recognize yourself in it, and you may feel a stranger to yourself.

While you are feeling strange, others are too. Conversations don't proceed at the usual pattern. Places of comfort now offer only tension. Your feelings, friends, parents and faculty may surprise you — you may surprise yourself.

Your fuse may be very short, your ability to tolerate the usual ambiguity nil. We're all in a transition together and the community

seems strange and difficult all around, especially for seniors among other seniors.

Seniors also have this wonderful habit of putting their education to work in the final semester — on your university. You begin to perceive all the flaws of our system and community, you'll be moved to critique and improve Elon. It feels like your last chance to make a difference around here.

All in all, nothing feels terribly stable, everything is at stake and chaos — internal and external — seems to reign.

You're getting ready to leave, obviously. You're off to a job, marriage, grad school, travel, all those plans that draw you. Some of you don't even want to be here right now, you're so ready to be gone. Some of you don't want to think about leaving at all, and may fantasize about another year near Elon.

What's not so obvious is that you and the whole community are immersed in a kind of anticipatory grief, in a process of letting go of one security in order to be prepared to build and embrace another.

While it is frightening, insecure, sad, happy, wild, awful and wonderful, this moment is a normal and very difficult part of young adult development. Reinhold Neibuhr called this experience "shipwreck" — being empty handed before grasping some new and better reality.

During this time, it may help to know that while it's not fun, this process is normal. You're not crazy. We're all grieving, shifting, journeying and preparing, both separately

and together.

Students also shouldn't shy away from spending moments alone in quiet. When you are alone, and silent, your feelings emerge. You'll eventually have to feel what you feel, why not go ahead and do it now, while you have good support.

Grief can be scary, but it's healthy and normal. Prayer, meditation, quiet can seem threatening, but will give you new hope, and will be especially helpful right now. The prayer and meditation rooms, or isolated corners of the Numen Lumen Pavilion, are available to you. Attend to yourself, and sustain healthy sleep, eating, exercise and leisure patterns. The grief process takes physical energy and our bodies can help us manage them better.

Make what difference you can, knowing that not everything is really under your control. It's a time to be patient, to learn to trust, to exercise faith in the future, in your choices, in yourself and your friends. It's not going to absolutely fall apart, and you don't personally have to hold it all together.

Finally, remember that you are a vital part of this community. You matter to all of us. What you're feeling, thinking, doing, and bearing makes a difference to the rest of us.

We have many reasons to rejoice and you are the most visible of these reasons, the signs of our success and accomplishments. The rest of us take much pride in you. Don't forget, you are the reason Elon exists and will continue to exist.

I hope and pray this helps. I'm happy to talk with you about these matters, in person or by email. Please let me know if I can do anything for you as we journey together.



HALL TAUXE | Photo Editor

Corporations hurt dietary guidelines

Today in the United States, politics run practically every aspect of our lives. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans are no exception. The guidelines, which are updated every five years, are ostensibly determined by scientific evidence that an expert

panel organizes into a number of dietary recommendations for the U.S. public.

Despite this claim, the influence of corporate interests on this round of recommendations is impossible to ignore. And it's clear that the meat industry is the largest corporate offender.

The most glaring flaw in the guidelines is the absence of straightforward advice to eat less red and processed meat — statements that were a critical component of the advisory panel's initial draft. This omission is remarkable because research has shown that the consumption of red and processed meat increases risk for the primary causes of death in the United States, including diseases such as heart disease, certain types of cancer and Type 2 diabetes.

Rather than including a recommendation in line with scientific evidence and public health goals, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department

of Agriculture (USDA) caved to corporate influence by omitting an essential direction that U.S. citizens cut back on red meat intake. What the public received instead is the weakened suggestion that they choose lean meats.

Prior to the release of the new guidelines, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a report that revealed a link between eating red and processed meats and developing cancer. In their report, researchers classified processed meat as "carcinogenic to humans" and red meat as "probably carcinogenic to humans."

Specifically, they revealed that there is strong evidence that processed meats (e.g., sausage, hot dogs and ham) cause colorectal and stomach cancer and moderate evidence that red meats (e.g., beef, pork and lamb) contribute to colorectal, pancreatic and prostate cancer. Furthermore, WHO found that eating 50 grams of processed meat daily — that's a little more than a single hot dog — increases your risk for these types of cancers by 18 percent.

In light of these findings, it is disquieting that the new Dietary Guidelines fail to recommend that people avoid red and processed meats. Also concerning is that their recommendation to eat "lean meats" includes certain red meats.

For instance, lamb is considered lean meat according to FDA standards, but is also considered a red meat by WHO. Thus, these guidelines can be interpreted as recommending that U.S. citizens choose foods that may in fact cause cancer.

Michael Taylor, administrator

of the Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS), recognizes the unjust corporate influence on the new Dietary Guidelines and remarked that the USDA is "thinking of the industry as the customer rather than the consumer, and thinking in terms of efficient inspection rather than protecting public health."

The numbers further support Taylor's point. The meat industry spent nearly \$3.5 million lobbying against the new guidelines. And other experts agree that the strong relationship between USDA and the meat industry amounts to a conflict of interest. Dr. Walter Willett, chair of the Department of Nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health, stated that the meat industry was successful in manipulating the guidelines because "the USDA's primary stakeholders are major food producers and manufacturers."

How is it that the Dietary Guidelines — the so-called "cornerstone of federal nutrition policy" — fail to advise U.S. citizens about the dangers of red and processed meat, for which there exists strong, reliable evidence? How is it that the U.S. government can be persuaded by the meat industry to omit consequential dietary recommendations and put the public's health at risk? It's clear that the government has yielded to industry pressure and failed to protect the U.S. public.

The health of citizens should not come second to politics, money and power. Fight back against this tragedy by leaving meat off your plate and out of your shopping cart. Put your interests first.

Practicing gratitude helps manage stress

Over the past 20 years, social scientists have found that religious beliefs and practices are linked to mental health and ability to function.

In a study called "Religion and mental health," authors

Prakash B. Behere, Anweshak Das, Richa Yadav and Anirudh P. Behere discovered that religious people had lower

rates of smoking, alcohol consumption and high blood pressure. Suicide rates, and even suicidal ideation, were also lower in religious people.

Many religious traditions have specific guidelines relating to mental health.

For example, the Jewish tradition promotes treatment of emotional and spiritual challenges in conjunction with physical ailments. Buddhism teaches practical knowledge about regulating one's mind in a way that decreases suffering. Christianity encourages its followers to find comfort in God's

love and strength.

But must someone be explicitly religious or spiritual to gain the mental health benefits religion offers? It doesn't seem that way — I know many atheists who are happy and well. I think that the difference might just be gratitude — being grateful for one's life and presence on earth.

I have religious friends who find meaning in their life based on their belief in God, and I have non-religious friends who consider how many conditions of the universe had to line up for them to exist, and they find gratitude through that. While

religions may offer specific tools for dealing with mental health challenges, tools can also be found in the secular world.

Support from friends, art, meditation

and exercise all help in managing mental health challenges and stress. So take some time out of your day to sit quietly, make some art, go for a walk with a friend or pray — if that's something you do. Take a moment to be grateful for your time on earth, in whatever way resonates with you.

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