

Exorcise Your Stress Demons

By Jena Laske

For The Capital Times

Trudging through the remaining days of the fall semester, I feel like a teaspoon of icing spread on a giant sheet cake — there just isn't enough of me to go around. Balancing a full course load, a job and a relationship is difficult. You probably have similar feelings.

We all experience stress at some time, but we don't always recognize the true source of it. So, before throwing your books against the wall or lighting up a smoke while the pressure is on, stop to consider the epicenter of your stress: your mind.

According to Beth Sonnenburg, a writer for *Joe Weiders' Muscle and Fitness Magazine*, stress is a mental attitude that perceives dangers or threats in situations or events.

Some of you may remember Tarnhelm's "Submit" advertisement last semester that showed a woman from the waist down, wearing a short skirt and holding a coiled bullwhip. I thought the ad was ingenious and humorous. Other students, however, found it so appalling they scribbled all over it and shouted at the editors in the hallways. The different reactions Penn State students had to the ad was all in the way they looked at it.

There is an old saying that asserts, "so you think, so shall you be." This is also known in modern psychology as self-fulfilling prophecy. Thoughts affect our mental viewpoint on situations and how we deal with them. If I think I am going to fail a test, I probably will. I'll convince myself that studying isn't worth my time since I'm going to fail anyway. Have you noticed this kind of thought pattern in your head? Negative thoughts are most dangerous when they are unconscious, precisely because if we are unaware of them, we can't challenge them.

When I notice I am experiencing debilitating thoughts, I ask myself, "Why am I avoiding this?" and "What's the worst thing that can happen?" Changing my perception of a situation frequently reduces the amount of stress I experience. A simple formula for how this works might be [an event + my reaction = the outcome].

Wayne Dixon, a researcher who

revealed the results of a case study on college students and stress in the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, says that on a mental level, prolonged stress can manifest as depression, irritability and a negative outlook on life. Therefore, it's essential to confront stress and try to cope with it. Besides changing your attitude, which may not be easy, another way to deal with stress is to distract yourself by doing something physical. If I am at

school, I'll go over to the gym in the Capital Union Building to lift weights. The physical demand of the repetitions forces me to simply concentrate on my breathing and my form instead of dwelling on the inadequacies in my head. If I am at home,

away from the convenience of the gym, I'll put on some of my favorite music, turn up the volume and dance. According to Sonnenburg, exercise burns off adrenaline released by stress and results in a better night's sleep and additional ability to concentrate. Also, exercise may alleviate physical ailments resulting from stress, including shallow breathing, backaches or migraines.

For those of you who don't like to work out, there are other ways to relieve stress. Playtime is my preferred way to relieve pressure. I consider playtime any activity that takes my mind off what's bothering me and focuses it on something constructive. Any number of possibilities exist here, from cooking or reading juicy books, to playing cards or musical instruments. I have several African drums in my home that I bang on with utter abandon. During the evening hours, when my neighbors are sleeping, I choose a gentle-sounding wooden flute to play. After having a bit of fun, I can usually return to my tasks feeling confident rather than daunted.

Stress is unavoidable, but to manage it effectively it's critical to notice the mental mind-set that is causing it and try to change your thoughts to positive ones. Think about ways you can effectively manage stress, such as planning your time wisely, working out and most importantly ... having a little fun!

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Photo by Steven Shearer

Marilyn Demey, Ruth Miller, Marianne Dimatteo, Valerie Duhig, Sharon Blouch and Kim Jorich walk on Nov. 14 as a way to draw attention to breast cancer.

Two New Groups Focus on Women's Issues

By Cathie McCormick Musser

Capital Times Editor In Chief

Two new campus organizations are focusing attention on women's issues. The Capital College Liaison Committee to the University Commission for Women is an arm of the larger PSU organization functioning at University Park since 1981. The fledgling student club, Penn State Organization for Women's Equality and Rights, just received authorization from the SGA.

The Capital College Liaison Committee represents both PSH and Schuylkill campuses with two officers from each location. According to CCLC/CFW Chair, Marylou Martz, coordinator of student health services, initial funding to support the committee came from University Park and PSH Provost Dr. Madlyn Hanes' discretionary funds.

As its initial kickoff program, CCLC/CFW sponsored a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk on Nov. 14. According to Martz, the then unofficial group POWER, as well as the SGA, helped support the breast cancer walk.

Both new groups focus on women's issues and, according to POWER co-chair Amanda Parsons, will work together whenever possible. In fact, POWER lists "promoting our affiliation with the Commission for Women" as one of the

group's objectives.

CCLC/CFW began meeting monthly early in the semester. POWER held an initial meeting last week. Parsons expressed disappointment at the meeting's turn out, but acknowledged the difficulty of organizing at the end of the semester. The group will renew their efforts during the spring semester.

Parsons recalls being surprised a women's group wasn't active at PSH. "There's normally some type of organization like this on a campus," Parsons said.

Parson's co-chair is Jennifer Boger, public policy graduate student, who worked with several other students over the summer to form the club's concept. The group's faculty advisor is Dr. Carol Nechemias.

According to Parsons, besides promoting the group's affiliation with CCLC/CFW, POWER plans to support "action-oriented research and programs, promote awareness on campus of women's issues and history."

According to Martz, CCLC/CFW's second event, a Holiday Basket Bonanza scheduled for Dec. 4 to 8, will raise funds to support future programs, including Bring Your Daughter to Work Day scheduled for April 26.

Shave-Off Ends Peacefully

By Kerry Monaco

Capital Times Staff Writer

The shave-off is finally over. Matt "Lapinski" Williams, one of five members of Club 831A who stopped shaving in early October, broke down on Nov. 28 after almost two months of hairiness. It seemed as though he was never going to shave, but Lapinski could not take it anymore. He claimed the reason he shaved was that when he ate, he got hair in his

mouth, but the hair was still attached to his face. So he shaved, which was not an easy task, but he did it.

Corey "Coach" Metz claimed victory Tuesday afternoon and said there would be a symposium some time in the next week discussing the entire competition. Congratulations are extended to all participants for their dedication and determination.