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The Freudian Slip

Welcome back from Thanksgiving Break!



November 2005

Cost: A slice of your grandma's pumpkin pie

Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Collette Fischer

Do you ever wish you could just hibernate during the cold and gloomy winter months? As the winter season approaches, people oftentimes develop dull dispositions. Studies have shown that some individuals tend to exhibit more signs of depression during the late fall and winter months. This seasonal pattern of depression is called **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**.

SAD is most commonly attributed to the reduced amount of light during the winter. Some theories suggest that as the days become darker, the brain overproduces the hormone **melatonin**, causing disrupted sleep patterns and depressed moods. Reduced sunlight

can also cause levels of **serotonin** to drop, which can also lead to depression (apollohealth.com). Symptoms of SAD are the same as the symptoms of depression, but those who suffer from SAD experience a full remission during the spring and summer (medicinenet.com).

Although Seasonal Affective Disorder was just recently recognized as a disorder, the phenomenon and possible treatments have been around for thousands of years. 2,000 years ago, a Greek Physician named Aretaeus said "Lethargics are to be laid in the light and exposed to the rays of the sun," (Holmes, 272-273). Today, individuals who exhibit symptoms of seasonal depression are

usually treated with **bright light therapy**, a modern version of Aretaeus' medicine. Studies have shown that if individuals with seasonal depression are exposed to bright lights for 15 minutes in the morning, their light intake is regulated and their moods are subsequently improved. These bright lights can be purchased from medical technology companies and they are made for use at home. Although other forms of treatment can be used (such as antidepressants, therapy, or a tropical vacation), light therapy is the typically the preferred treatment because it naturally supplies the patient with the light they were lacking.

Suicide in College

By Lisa Egan

With the change in weather and finals for classes looming ahead, this time of year can be extremely stressful for college students. Along with this stress comes the increased potential for suicidal thoughts and/or actions. Suicide, the second leading cause of death among college students, accounts for approximately 1,088 deaths on college campuses each year (National Mental Health Association [NIMH], 2002). Addressing this significant statistic, mental health professionals have attempted to understand the reasoning behind it. The following are reasons they have come up with:

- College is usually the first time

that young adults leave their homes, separating themselves from their family and friends to enter a new, unknown world.

- Students feel immense academic and social pressures to succeed.
- College attracts students who are academically-driven overachievers who have a hard time tolerating the slightest hint of failure.
- Students may have pre-existing mental health conditions that are left untreated.

A large majority of young adults over the age of 18 who are diagnosed with depression do not receive appropriate or even any treatment at all (NIMH, 2002). Therefore, if you or someone you know are suffering from depression or have had suicidal thoughts, here are some resources on campus for you to turn to:

CSB Counseling and Health Education

Location: Mary Commons - 2nd Floor
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Phone: x5605

SJU Counseling and Health Promotion

Location: Mary Hall #10
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Phone: x3236

Does Violating One's Limits Cause More Problem Drinking?

By Nate Dick and Jake Foster



"Some people are able to casually drink, others are not. For those people who cannot, setting limits for themselves can be a dangerous spiral into "problematic drinking", or alcoholism."



According to new findings by a research team from the *Journal of the Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, setting limits about amount of alcohol consumption may result in overindulging in the future. Some people are able to casually drink, but others are not. For those people who cannot, setting limits for themselves can be a dangerous spiral into "problematic drinking", or alcoholism. Even drinking one more drink than one planned can leave a social drinker vulnerable to having too much the next time, according to the lead author of the study, Mark Muraven, PhD. This is because once a limit is surpassed the individual may have feelings of guilt which leads to over-consumption. The full study was conducted by Mark Muraven, PhD, R. Lorraine Collins, PhD, and Elizabeth Morsheimer, of the Research Institute on Addiction at the University of Buffalo of SUNY, and Saul Shiffman, PhD and Jean Paty, PhD, of the University of Pittsburgh. Their findings were supported by many other addiction researchers, one of them being Mark Litt, PhD. He is a health psychologist with the University of Connecticut Health Center. According to Dr. Litt, "The authors have produced support for a phenomenon that is by no means obvious: 'the limit violation effect.'"

Essentially, the results suggest that a morning-after evaluation of over-consumption can

send social drinkers into a "vicious cycle," according to Alan Marlatt, PhD, director of the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington. Dr. Marlatt distinguishes between skill power and will power when used to resist over-consumption. The vicious cycle occurs when one tries to use will power instead of skill power. Skill power is described as the ability to use effective coping mechanisms to both limit drinking in the first place, and deal with the "aftermath," of overindulgence if it occurs. Will power is just trying to resist the next drink by using sheer self-motivated desire not to overindulge. This is also partially why surpassing limits can lead down wrong paths, because people feel like their best effort to resist was not good enough. You need to go into a night of drinking with a plan or a backup plan if something goes differently than initially intended.

To further the study, Muraven and his team followed a group of friends and monitored the relationship between drinking and distress in social drinkers, defined as people who have at least four drinks per week and have not had alcohol-related problems. Participants of the study logged their alcohol intake and their "cognitive and emotional responses" to that drinking, using handheld computers. This style of recording was utilized to create an accurate account of how the people felt after each

drink, instead of having them try to remember how they felt at the end of the day, in retrospect. Author Rachel Adelson, expresses this type of methodology as ecological momentary assessment (EMA).

Many different studies were created. For the first two studies the researchers used 106 social drinkers between the ages 18 and 20. They taught the participants how to use the custom software loaded on the PDAs (personal digital assistants). The participants had only one requirement and that is that they could not have any history of alcohol problems or misuse. The second study was done the exact same way, except the team used 38 social drinkers between the ages 21 and 50, with the average being about 27 years old. Each participant used a PDA for around 2-3 weeks, and logged their data during several times of the day. They entered data in the morning, evening, before and after drinking, and at four randomly-timed intervals throughout the day. Questions ranged from morning questions like "Do you plan to drink tonight?" to evening questions like "Did you become intoxicated?" Other questions asked participants about their physical feelings and their emotional feelings about their previous days' drinking. Also researchers used a TRI to measure the amount of temptation for the participant to overindulge. A TRI is a Temptation

and Restraint Inventory.

The whole point of the study was to provide physical and empirical evidence that social drinkers are susceptible to the limit violation effect. Using the data from the PDAs, researchers determined that there was significantly more guilt and regret reported during

mornings where he or she had overindulged the previous night. This can relate to college life very well because most of the participants in the study were underage, about 18-20 years old. With this new evidence about problem drinking, and causes of alcoholism, it is safe to say that students will have to take this into account when they

choose to drink. It is not just the people who overindulge every night that have to be worried about alcoholism anymore, it is all social drinkers. For more information on the study headed by Dr. Mark Muraven, you can look at October's issue of the *Monitor on Psychology* magazine, funded by the American Psychology Association.



Home for the Holidays

As the holiday season approaches, it is obvious all students are anxious for the few days off. With the first holiday out of the way, reflect on how you felt about your holiday break. Did you dread coming back to school or were you thrilled to get away from your family again? All students welcome the opportunity to sleep-in, stuff themselves with homemade food, and avoid homework for a few days. However, as my third holiday season at CSB approaches, I noticed that not all students view holiday breaks in the same way.

For many first-years the freshness of college may just be starting to wear off. Two months of freedom has finally caught up with them in the midst of midterms, cold season, and roommate troubles. All the stress may be having first-years wondering "Where's my mom!?" The opportunity to go home for a few days may seem a welcome opportunity to first-years who are still hoping for a little security and the com-

fort of the familiar.

At the same time, first-years may also have difficulty adjusting to being home. Going back to a world with rules and curfews may be frustrating after two months of independence. Counselors at Villanova University suggest first-years compromise with their parents on rules while they are home during breaks. This time of year can be just as stressful for parents, as they too may still be adjusting to their son or daughters transition to college. (Adjusting to College, 2005) For upperclassmen, this time of the year is similarly filled with the stress of classes and colds. However, their approach tends to be much different. They just want out! It does not matter to where as long as it has nothing to do with school.

Upperclassmen have gotten over the homesickness as season

By Nicole Fritz

veterans. They have coped with midterms and papers. Their approach to holiday breaks are simple- don't spend time at home. Upperclassmen tend to "go home" to do other things besides spend time with their family, such as work or see friends.

No matter what your view on going home for the holiday is, remember that holiday breaks are the perfect time to take a much needed breather from the stresses of coursework and college life. Use your reflections from Thanksgiving break to help you make the most out of Winter break.

Source:

"Adjusting to College Life" Villanova University Counseling Center

<http://www.studentlife.villanova.edu/counselingcenter/psychtopics/adjustingcollege.html>



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College of St. Benedict
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E-mail:
psychstud@csbsju.edu

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Seasonal Affective Disorder pg 1

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Suicide in College pg 1

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Going Home pg 3

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Check us out at
www.csbsju.edu/

Meghan's Corner!

By, Meghan Orgeman

Hello Psychology Majors!

I have been hearing horror stories of papers piling up and back-to-back tests as classes begin to wrap-up. I just wanted to remind you of the importance of taking some time for yourself. Whatever your strategy is for relieving stress, it is important that you do not neglect spending time doing things you like to do. To effectively use your mind you must also take care of your body!

Recognizing the cause of your stress is also very important in combating this life-draining force. One technique to identify where your stress is coming from is to simply write each stressful event down. That way you can visually pinpoint things that stress you out and hopefully avoid or better anticipate these things when they come into your life again. There are three kinds of stressors to be aware of when determining where your stress is stemming from. The first are **external stressors**. These are things outside of you that often times you can't change. Some examples of this involve bad weather, noise, schedule changes, and traffic. Another form of stress are **relational stressors**. These are things that we sometimes can change. They involve conflicts with roommates, friends, family, dating partners, or coworkers. They also involve problems with professors (which I'm sure *never* happens!), or losing a relationship. The third type of stress are termed **internal stressors**. These include things we say or do to ourselves that cause stress. Examples of this come in the form of perfectionism, negative thoughts or feelings

about us, and big decisions such as choosing a major or career. The best part about these stressors is that, although not always easy, we can change these to reduce stress.



After recording the different events that yield stress in your life, the next step is to record your different coping mechanisms. Simply put, you need to figure out how your body reacts when faced with stress. Some people may display physical symptoms such as headaches, changes in appetite or eating, sleep disturbances, fatigue or exhaustion, or even increased illness. Other people may experience more emotional symptoms such as depression, anxiety, irritability, anger, impatience, low self-esteem and a tendency to cry more easily. Stress could also cause mental symptoms that get in the way of your concentration, attitude, interest and judgment as well as social symptoms such as a withdrawal from others, loneliness, or unnecessary shopping-sprees. If you are experiencing any of these kinds of symptoms you have gone beyond your optimal stress level and may be putting yourself at risk. These symptoms are your internal security system to warn you to reduce the stress in your life or learn how to better manage it before major damage is done to your body.

There are many ways to help manage your stress. For your body you can

eat healthy and regularly, you can get around seven to eight hours of sleep per night, and you can do relaxation exercises to help lower your elevated arousal. For your mind you could set realistic expectations of yourself, you could realize your degree of control when coping with problems and stress and you could practice positive thought ("I like myself...I like myself..."). Other things you can do are to know your limits, let go of the other things beyond your control, enjoy yourself and the humor in life, get out and exercise, talk to someone about what is troubling you, and improve your time management skills.

So as the semester wraps up, remember to take time for yourself. Identify what stresses you out and how you cope with it and then use different coping strategies to help you release unnecessary stress. Remember that stress is normal and can actually be good at times. Yet, when it begins to interfere with your daily functioning go for a run, go to bed early, cut something out of your life, or talk about it with a friend or counselor.

Good luck Psychology Majors on your last few weeks of fall semester! Enjoy the people and things going on around you!

