

National Conference on Percussion Pedagogy

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“Understanding and Helping Young Percussionists with Mental Health & Wellness Issues”

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Stats (National Alliance on Mental Health):

- 75% of lifetime cases of mental health conditions begin by age 24
- One in four young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have a diagnosable mental illness
- More than 11% of college students have been diagnosed or treated for anxiety in the past year and more than 10% reported being diagnosed or treated for depression
- More than 80% of college students felt overwhelmed by all they had to do in the past year and 45% have felt things were hopeless
- Almost 73% of students living with a mental health condition experienced a mental health crisis on campus. Yet, 34.2% reported that their college did not know about their crisis.
- 40% of students with diagnosable mental health conditions did not seek help.
- Concern of stigma is the number one reason students do not seek help
- 7% of college students have “seriously considered suicide” during the past year
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death on college campuses

Warning Signs:

- Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes
- Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated)
- Sever mood swings that cause problems in relationship
- Not eating, throwing up, significant weight loss/gain

“Tips for Preventing Student Burnout”

from Florida National University

These are some of the biggest warning signs that we overlook:

MENTAL

- Making careless mistakes that you ordinarily wouldn't make.
- Lashing out at others due to pressure and frustration.
- Lacking opinions or ideas to classroom discussions or group projects.
- Losing confidence, motivation, and otherwise feeling incapable to keep deadlines.

PHYSICAL

- Constantly feeling exhausted despite getting sleep or not sleeping well at all.
- Habitually stress eating, overthinking, or anything else you know is a bad habit for you.

- Not noticing pain and tension in your body from working or thinking about work constantly.
- Experiencing frequent headaches or dizzy spells.
- Finding yourself getting sick more often with head colds, stomach flu, etc.

EMOTIONAL

- Finding yourself in strife and sensitive over small issues with others like comments or criticism.
- Not being able to concentrate on leisure activities like reading or watching a film.
- Constantly feeling bored or uninterested in matters you used to enjoy.

Dealing with Burnout: Getting Help

If you exhibit any of these symptoms and find yourself having severe negative moods or are in a state of being totally overwhelmed and incapacitated, it's important to take this seriously and deal with burnout right away. Often people are in such a state by the time they are close to a burnout; they can no longer recognize the symptoms. Yet, if you recognize the warning signs of impending burnout in yourself, keep in mind that it will surely only get worse if you leave it alone. When you ignore your body's signals—the aching shoulders or the inability to keep track of our schedule—you're headed for disaster. It'll build up over time and these signs are your body's way of trying to get your attention. Students put a lot of pressure on themselves to do well, but nothing is more important than your health and well-being. If burnout is looming, allow yourself to get support from professionals who can help you make a transition to a healthier lifestyle and habits for yourself that include respecting yourself, your needs, and your boundaries. You must take steps to get your life back into balance in order to prevent burnout from becoming a full-blown breakdown.

Here are a few tips for preventing student burnout:

TIME MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Students are less likely to experience burnout when they keep up with their assignments in a timely fashion and prepare in advance for exams. Effectively managing time and deadlines by using a calendar is very helpful for keeping track of priorities and deadlines, keeping on track with responsibilities, and avoiding procrastination.

BREAKING DOWN RESPONSIBILITIES

Breaking down long-term goals or massive projects into smaller, more achievable benchmarks can go a long way toward avoiding the stress that occurs with last-minute projects and trying to pull all-nighters. Burnout often occurs when people do not allow themselves to set smaller goals, achieve them, and feel good about their success before moving on to the next phase of a project.

SET REASONABLE GOALS AND STICK TO THEM

Although stress is not the same as burnout, stress certainly can lead to burnout if not managed appropriately. Being unrealistic about goals and your ability to meet them, piling on more courses than you can handle and having a social life that leaves little time for work can be a

recipe for disaster. It's important not only to avoid too many classes but also to be sure that you have a mix of courses. Even a student passionately interested in psychology may find taking only psych courses too taxing. Likewise, setting unattainable goals often results in students throwing in the towel rather than persevering.

MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH AND RESPECT PERSONAL NEEDS

It sounds like common sense advice, and it is. Eating healthily, getting exercise, and having enough sleep are imperative to staying on a healthy course and not letting normal stress lead to burnout. In addition, try to consistently make time for stress-reducing activities such as taking relaxing walks, going for a swim or other physical exercise, doing regular deep breathing, or any other activity that you find pleasurable and not stressful. Keep in mind that watching TV or killing time on the computer does not actually relieve stress – it often just lets it sit dormant. The most effective stress-reducing activities are either calming ones such as meditation, yoga, walking, and breathing, or physical exercise and sport- because they release positive endorphins and aids in sleep. Adding these activities to your routine make a big difference in feeling good and achieving a healthy life balance that will help you avoid burnout.

“GO DARK” WITH A SOCIAL-MEDIA SHUTDOWN

The constant presence of social media and Internet updates in our life can add to a sense of overstimulation that can overwhelm us. It's important to take a break from school life, and that doesn't just mean putting the books aside for a day off from studies. Disconnecting from social media is recommended for students and workers alike. At least one hour before going to sleep shut off mobile devices and social media. Not only can the information run you ragged, but the light screens in computers, smartphones, tablets, and other devices can interfere with your circadian rhythms and render you unable to calm down, rest or sleep through the night. Turning off and tuning out for a while may be the best way to avoid burnout.

Fight Back Against Burnout

Many experts say that in order to effectively and safely deal with burnout, you need to use the “Three R” approach:

RECOGNIZE

Watch for and recognize the warning signs of burnout. Meanwhile, learn to say “no” and be OK with it. Burnout happens when you find yourself trying to “do it all” and falling short. You can lessen the stress by delegating tasks, shifting your priorities or just being realistic about how much time you have in a day. The word “no” needs no explanation and will start you down the path of recognizing the sources of burnout.

REVERSE

Acknowledge the damage and reverse it by managing stress and seeking support. Stop numbing with noise. You don't always have to be moving, catching up, or optimizing yourself and your surrounds 24/7. Let yourself just be and reflect as this is sometimes exactly what your body and mind need most. Disconnect and take regular breaks where decompressing is the only

objective. By doing this regularly, you'll have more energy to make progress when you need it most.

RESILIENCE

Build your resilience to stress by taking care of your physical and emotional health. Create time for yourself. It's easy to overextend ourselves by trying to do too much at once. Schedule personal time every single day, even for just 10 minutes. There is always something to do, but everyone can take 10 minutes for themselves to do something personally enjoyable and fulfilling.

“Undergraduate Music Student Stress Burnout”

diss., Helen Jan Orzel, San Jose State Univ., 2010

- “Music Majors reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than non-music majors.”
- *Depersonalization* – a state in which an individual experiences either his feelings, thoughts, memories, or bodily sensations as not belonging to himself
 - o “Depersonalization corresponds to the notion of coping; through depersonalization, the individual attempts to staunch the depletion of emotional energy by treating others as objects or numbers rather than as people.”
- “You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health
 - o “Exercises deepens breathing, which counteracts the fast and shallow breathing associated with stress. Any kind of exercise can do this, no just aerobic exercise. Exercise also relaxes the muscles by reducing and even eliminating stress hormones in the blood stream.”
- Sleep/naps: “A midday snooze reverses information overload and that a 20 percent overnight improvement in learning a motor skill is largely traceable to a late stage of sleep that some early risers might be missing. Their studies suggest that the brain uses a night's sleep to consolidate the memories of habits, actions and skills learned during the day." Thirty-minute naps were sufficient to prevent any further deterioration, but one-hour naps boosted capabilities. Hour long naps have more than four times as much deep, or slow wave sleep and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep than thirty-minute naps.”
- A college musician's environment can significantly influence stress levels. Environmental stressors include overworked professors unable to provide support, competitive peers, lack of resources such as practice space or counseling services, overburdened schedules, and high standards and expectations set by institutions. Patterson notes that developing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help reduce the effects of environmental stress, promoting resilience.
 - o In reference to dealing with burnout, Sanford writes: “We may have to look at some unpleasant facts in this process, but we can be sure of this: the price will be paid somewhere. If we do not pay the price creatively by examining ourselves creatively and carefully, we will have to pay the price later in the form of exhaustion with our work, broken relationships, or a life that has been incorrectly lived.”

“When Music Goes Up in Flames: The Impact of Advising on Music Major Burnout”

by Marilee L. Teasley and Erin M. Buchanan

- quality academic advising has been named an important predictor of college persistence and retention
- Generally speaking, students who perceive high quality interactions with individuals concerned about their well-being and progress will likely remain in school
- 79% of interviewed students link their self-esteem to their levels of performance

- After spending many hours alone in a practice room, some music majors feel exhausted, isolated, and lonely; in one study, students rated practicing as an unfriendly activity. A competitive and exhausting environment can lead to anxiety, stress, and mental health issues
- Music students experience the same stressors that other college students do, such as financial problems, strained relationships, and family emergencies
 - o Additional stressors resemble those of the music profession, such as a perceived lack of musical progress, fear of job insecurity as a musician, and the struggle to find the balance between music and personal life

Dr. Meyer's Recommendations:

- Understand “this generation,” don’t use these as excuses, but as starting points for research to help as many students as possible (not all students have these issues, but they are common in many students):
 - o Trouble problem solving (Point and Click Generation)
 - o Long-term attention issues (Snapchat Generation)
 - o Time management issues (Helicopter Parents Generation)
 - o Financial issues (highest amount of debt for college students ever)
 - More students than ever work while being full-time students
- “Laziness Does Not Exit, But Unseen Barriers Do.” By Devon Price:
https://medium.com/@devonprice/laziness-does-not-exist-3af27e312d01?fbclid=IwAR0YuRd6KhlpAmoQfQ_Dyv2Vsqs585Njvp4pVvqhY2Zyr6hqYNjoA5AKJrE
 - o Students struggle to start projects/assignments/practice sessions because they think about all the work they have to do to get to the end result. This is where Goal Setting helps.
 - o Students who have academic problems usually have issues they are dealing with that are the reason for their low performance. Family issues, financial issues, relationship issues, etc.
- Ask questions every lesson. Asking one question never works, ask 4-6 questions and you will get real, helpful responses.
- Work on time management every lesson: iCal, daily planner, Google Calendar, etc.
 - o Have them put in EVERYTHING: sleep, eating, practice, classes, free time,
 - Could be a bi-product of common helicopter parenting
- Work on Goal Setting: long-term, weekly, and daily
- Give them different ways to practice: “Practicing with Purpose” by Kish
- Let them talk: it’s too easy to give advice, when really they just want/need someone to listen
- Grounding and Mindfulness Techniques
 - o 5-minute mindfulness meditation before practicing: <https://youtu.be/dBNc5dQh8zQ>
 - o 30-minute Mindfulness Body Scan: <https://youtu.be/6d0cq7YQmMY>
 - o Sleep Meditation: https://youtu.be/L12_GAi2UQ0
 - o 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique
 - 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can feel
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you can smell
 - 1 thing you can taste