

**Tips for a Healthy
Relationship**

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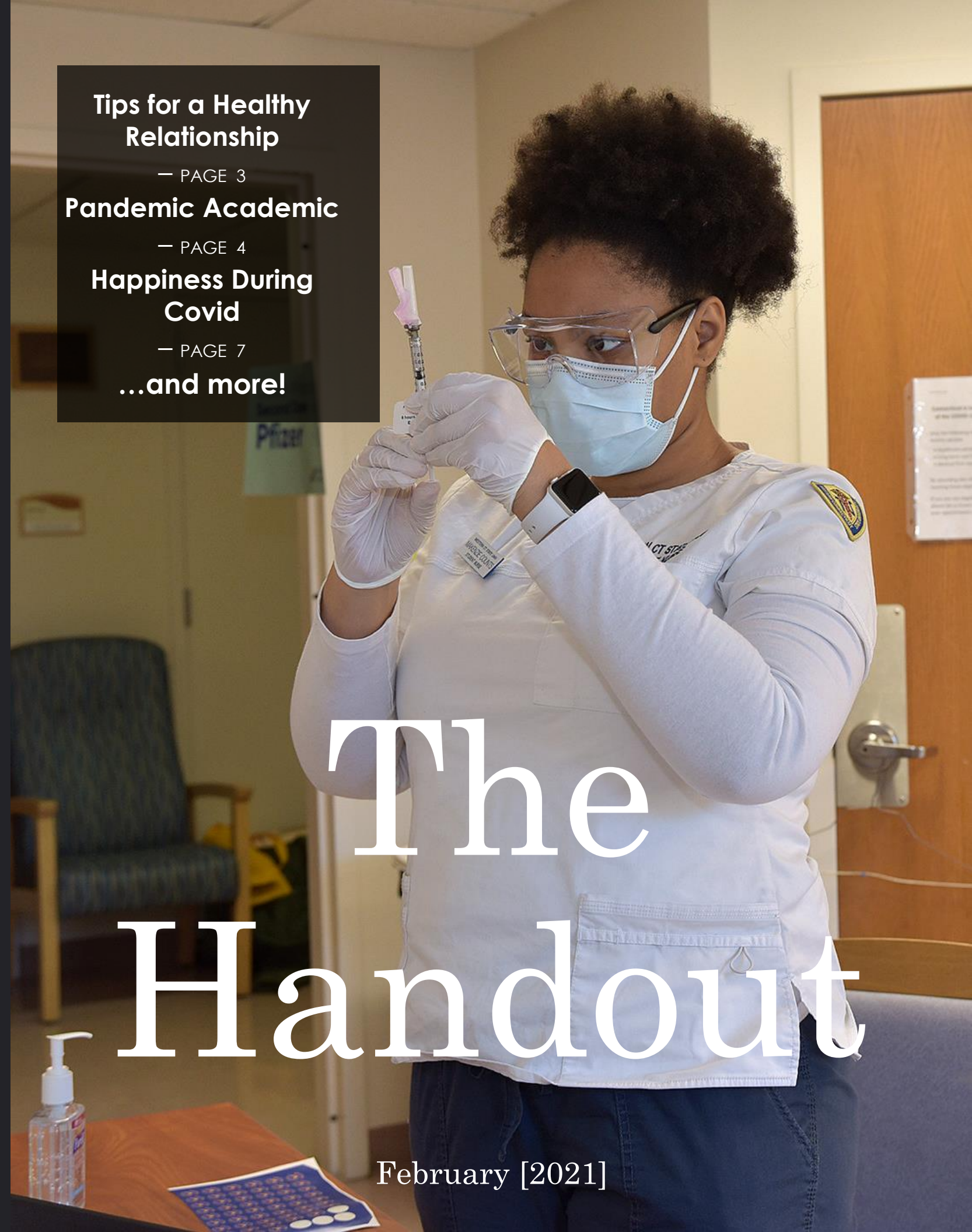
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...and more!



The Handout

February [2021]

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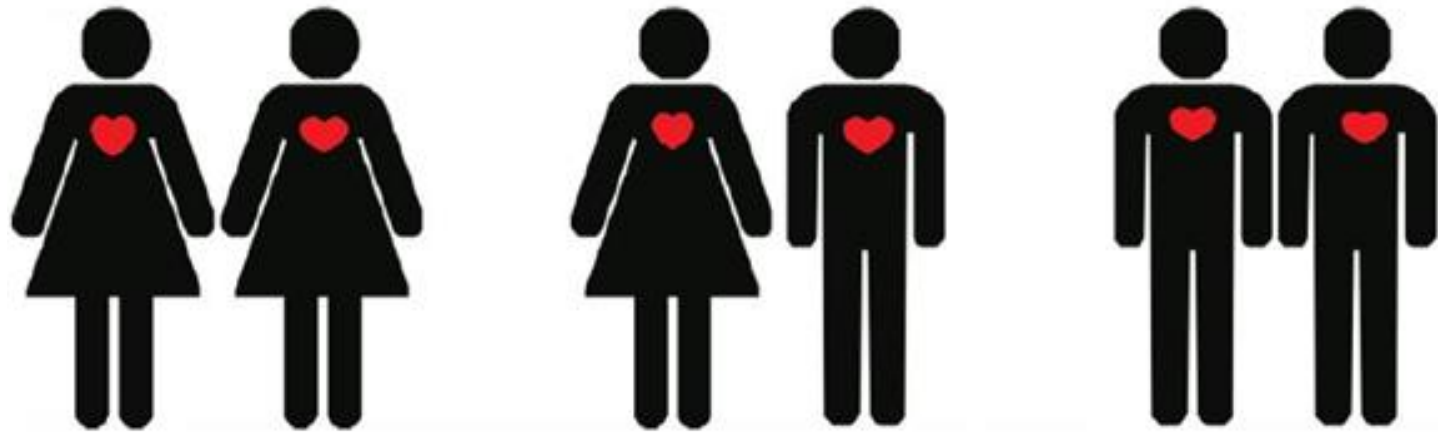
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1 Tips for a Healthy Relationship

Caitlyn Archambault, Centennial ARM



Relationships in current times are hard enough as they are. Red Flags, toxicity, baggage, mental health and so many other issues, how do you maintain a healthy relationship? Thankfully, you don't have to question it any longer, I have found some tips on how to do exactly that!

Maintain a Friendship

- It is important to stay friends with your significant other, to keep the spark going. Do things you would do with your friends: make fun plans, ask how their day was and put in an effort.

Take interest in each other's interests

- No two people have exactly the same interests, and that's okay! What matters is that you show interest in what they like, even if you have to fake it at first. Show you care and if you can get involved with it, do it!

Count the good, not the bad

- It's easy to dwell over the bad things and let them get the best of you, but to keep a

healthy relationship you have to try and break this habit. Good should always outweigh the bad in healthy relationships. Focus on the good and tackle the bad together.

Make Goals

- You want to have your own personal life goals no matter what, your partner is there to help you and support you, as you are for them. You should also have goals together, where you both want to be together in the future; do you see the future together, etc.

Keep your Person your priority

- This person is someone that you see a future with and want to be with; to keep it that way you have to prioritize. Certainly, we are still in school and have busy schedules. Your schooling should come first, but make sure you have that time cut out for your significant other.



Go the extra mile

- Relationships take effort but going that extra mile could make all the difference. Plan a special night for them, with all the things they like. Give them your undivided attention when talking about important things.

Honesty and Communication

- The easiest and hardest of them all. It is extremely difficult to be 100% honest with anyone, but with your partner it might be even harder. Know that if they truly feel the same way, you will be able to tell them anything. Communication is the MOST important. If you don't feel right about something, tell them. If you are overjoyed but worried about their reaction, it's okay, tell them. You and your partner could take on the world together if you just communicate with each other.

Stay Independent

- It can be difficult to stay you in a relationship. You want to consume your life with your partner and what they want and to be with them all the time. It is important that you stay independent. Have different interests, have separate friends, and know when to tell them you need your time to yourself. It is encouraged to have time to yourself outside of your relationship.

<https://laurengleisberg.com/10-tips-healthy-relationship/>

Relationship box

Most people get into a relationship believing a myth that a relationship is a beautiful box full of all the things they have longed for: companionship, intimacy, friendship, etc.

The truth is that a relationship at the start is an empty box. You must put something in before you can take anything out.

There is no love in a relationship; love is in people. And people put love in a relationship.

There is no romance in a relationship; you have to infuse it into your relationship.

A couple must learn the art, and form the habit, of giving, loving, serving, praising, and keeping the box full. If you take more out than you put in, the box will soon be empty.

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Pandemic Academic



Samantha Cross, Newbury ARM

The spring semester has sprung into action for students here at Western Connecticut State University. Even though some of us are undercover pros at online classes, it's still important to talk about ways to stay ahead this semester as we implement new and old changes in our lives. Some of us are not pros at online classes and find ourselves struggling to pay attention and stay attentive during lectures. As always, we ARMs, along with other resources, are here for you as students in case you need some extra help in online classes.

I have picked up a few tips and tricks that help me stay focused on class material and to excel in the online world we live in:

- First and foremost, PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY! I know – this is daunting. It is very easy to sit on our phones and scroll endlessly through Instagram or Twitter instead of looking at our professor's screen. Obviously, we are not paying attention when we do this. If we were in class normally, what would our professors do? Take away our phones probably, so do it for yourself. If you need a more motivating thought, remember you're paying for these classes still.
- Take handwritten notes instead of typing them. Order some notebooks online or brave the store if you dare, but you shouldn't go without notebooks and pens or pencils for notetaking- EVER. When you hand-write your notes, the information sticks in your

brain better because you're thinking about what you're hearing and how to put it on the page. I still take notes during my online classes, and my grades thanked me for it.

- You're out of class, now what? You should do your homework! Doing your homework soon after class will help you stay on top of the workload and give you plenty of time to ask your professors clarifying questions or to break it up into manageable chunks before you have any other work to do. You can then review your homework and notes between classes, so the information is always fresh in your mind and readily accessible. This is called **distributed practice**, which is proven to be very effective in helping students learn and retain class material. When you use the distributed practice regularly it shortens your study sessions and test times and opens up more time for you to fit in extracurricular activities, or participate in programs around campus.
- Take time away from your screen. Even though we live in a virtual world where we have to stay in front of our screens for a long time, it's equally important to take time away from them to succeed in online class. Mental health is just as important as your schoolwork, if not more important. Some ways to get around excessive screen use is to buy hard copies of your textbooks so you're reading books instead of a screen.

- Schedule some breaks between homework on the computer; you can always stop to eat, move around a little bit with some exercise, and nap if you must! Zoom fatigue is a very real thing.
- Find your "school formula." What does that mean? Your "school formula" is your perfect study habitat. Maybe your perfect study sesh is by yourself, headphones on listening to Lady Gaga or Kendrick Lamar, and it's early afternoon. I know my school formula is anytime after 10:30 AM, by myself, and listening to some lo-fi study beats. I do not work well when other people are around

and talking- it is very distracting for me. When you find your school formula, it will be easy for you to do your work because you know what environment you succeed in.

If you find yourself needing more help than this article can provide, be sure to reach out to our resources on campus. The Tutoring Resource Center is offering virtual appointments, as well as the Math Clinic, Writing Center, Counseling Services, and the Women's Center. We may be socially distant, but we are ready to help. :-)



3 The Forgotten Class: Managing Online Asynchronous Courses

Audrey Redpath, Pinney ARM

Did you anticipate taking a partial or full load of online classes when you registered for college? If you're like me and hundreds of other WCSU students, that answer is a very loud **NO**. The COVID-19 Pandemic has changed a lot about our undergraduate years, including the transition of many of our majors and courses to an online-only or hybrid format to address safety concerns on campus and protect those of us in the campus community most at risk.

Before the campus shut down last March, many of our peers had never taken a single asynchronous online course. Now, the majority of students at WCSU have at least one and many have hybrid schedules mixing online **asynchronous** (your traditional blackboard hosted no-scheduled-course-time format), **synchronous** (zoom, teams, blackboard collaborate and webex university virtual meetings), and **in-person** (new required commuter testing) courses.

Some have excelled in the transition. Others found themselves in a new context for learning they weren't prepared for, weathering one of the toughest and potentially least successful academic years of their lives.

So what makes traditional online classes so tough for some of us?

The answer is twofold: Freedom. Exposure.

Asynch online classes are self directed, and with some professors that might mean you never heard from the instructor at all except for grading feedback and an introductory post at the beginning of the semester. While other Professors may be more proactive with outreach, sending reminder emails throughout the semester and hosting some class discussions, others may leave the mechanics to you; everything in an asynch online class revolves around the student experience and self-determination, for better or for worse.

This is where the freedom of these online classes can come back to bite you. In an in-person sync course, you're regularly reminded each week of what is expected of you when you have face to face time with your professor and classmates. The structure of the class, in person and online sync, ties a knot around your finger and tries to keep you grounded, reminding you of deadlines and the general progression of your learning. Without it, the job of keeping yourself up-to-date and grounded in your class expectations is yours alone.

So how can you combat that? To tame the freedom of the online course a little I recommend three tactics:

1) Talk to your professor and the other students in your class regularly, over email, during office hours, or by forming small study groups. Try and simulate some of the social elements of your sync courses in whatever ways you can.

2) Become your own drill sergeant. Set expectations for yourself in each class for the semester and again every week, giving yourself benchmarks and check-ins you might be missing from the in-class experience.

3) Don't forget the class exists when your sync or in-person courses get more involved. That brings us to the next trouble with asynch online courses: **Exposure.**

I've talked to dozens of students at WCSU and other universities in Connecticut about their experience in covid-impacted courses this year, and there's one recurring horror story I keep hearing (and sometimes telling): the asynch ghost story. Have you heard the phrase "out of sight, out of mind?" That aphorism came to life in a real, destructive way for many of us in the Spring and Fall semesters of 2020. Student after student told me sheepishly how they at some point in the semester paused and realized they had an online class that they had not checked in days, if not weeks, because they were so distracted by their other work.

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It's not that unusual, and in some ways the format lends itself to this disappearing act. Blackboard lets you hide away most of your course content behind one link to your class and if your other courses are exploding in emails, announcements, or especially in-person or synchronous work and projects, it can become easy to start avoiding that link without thinking. And once you remember? It's hard to grit your teeth and find out what you've missed, creating a dangerous avoidance loop that can leave you failing a class.

Our brains struggle to keep focused on the uncommon, especially during the stretches between when we experience it. So to combat this, you need to trick your brain into treating your async online courses like every other course you take which requires some organization and grit. Here's what I suggest:

Print out and save each of your course syllabi. Pull every single deadline you know in advance. For every big assignment or test you're going to make at least one two-category blocks: one for the deadline and one or more blocks in your schedule explicitly for working on the assignment or studying for the test, treating that time block like it's your class session for the week.

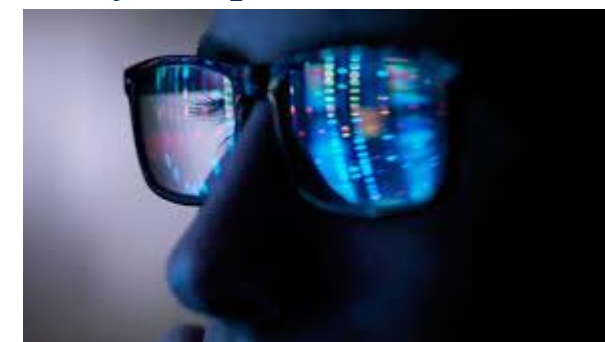
Once you have this down for the syllabi, you're going to pick a time each week (I like midday Sunday) to review your class materials and add new deadlines and upcoming projects to the calendar in the same way. This will create a system of reminders and a time blocked schedule for you that should prevent complete course amnesia.

Other strategies include connecting with your friends and sharing your different class information to keep each other accountable, taking advantage of your professor's office hours to ask for advice in managing specific courses, and treating online courses as a kind of job you 'clock in' and 'clock out' of regularly, checking for new items and finishing your work.

It may be a tough transition, but async courses can become manageable for everyone with the right tools. Take advantage of the Academic Coaching offered by WCSU's Tutoring Center and your residential ARMs, or connect with your Advisor to talk about more strategies you can use to keep on track and avoid writing an academic ghost story of your own.

4 | Blue Light Glasses: What Are They and How Can They Help?

Sara Slaiby, Centennial ARM

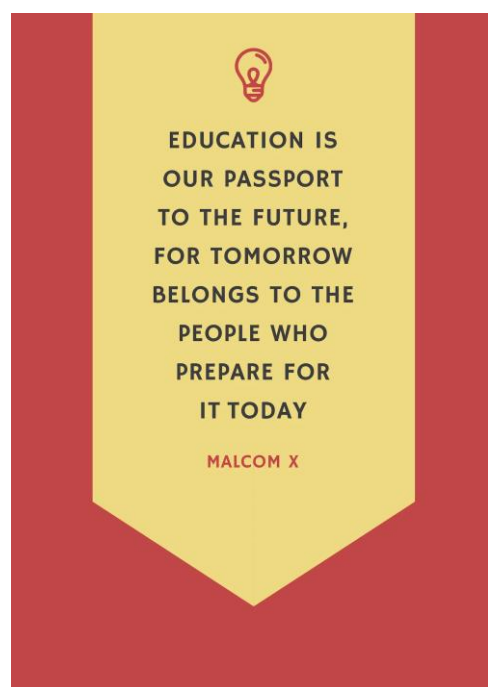


As you have probably heard, the new trend racing across the country is something referred to as "blue light glasses". You may think to yourself, what are these, why are they suddenly so popular, and where can I buy them? Well, I am here to answer all of your questions.

First, what are blue light glasses? Blue light glasses are a set of glasses, whether prescription or non-prescription, which have a specially crafted lens which blocks out blue light. Blue light emits from your phone screen, laptop, TV, etc. and can be very harmful to the eyes over a prolonged period of time. With continued exposure to blue light over a long period of time, it can cause a plethora of problems including, but not limited to, retinal damage, vision problems such as eye strain, irritated eyes, dry and/or watery eyes, and can even contribute to the progression/presence of cataracts. Blue light, however, does not just affect ocular processes such as those listed above, it also can interfere with your body's internal clock, which is referred to as your circadian rhythm. Your circadian rhythm is the body's

internal clock which regulates when you become tired and sleep, as well as when your body decides it is time to wake up and become energized. Prolonged exposure to blue light suppresses the body's natural hormonal response to release a hormone called melatonin. Melatonin is the body's hormone that makes us feel sleepy/drowsy. Therefore, the closer to bedtime that you are exposed to blue light, the more melatonin that will be suppressed, which consequently will decrease your ability to fall asleep.

Next question, why are these so popular?? Well, with the current state of our country, given the pandemic, is that many are forced to work from home/virtually, which places many people in front of a computer who previously had not been. With the increased exposure to blue light, many are finding that they develop migraines, watery/dry eyes, etc., and are in search of a solution.



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Blue light glasses are affordable, easy to obtain, and help drastically with the problems many are facing!

Our final, and most pressing question, where can you find them? Blue light glasses, given the increase in demand, can be found in many stores near you! Target, Walmart, CVS, Walgreens, all have blue light glasses available. Blue light glasses can range anywhere from \$15-100. Depending on whether or not you have prescription glasses, however, can increase the price, as well as limit where you can find blue light glasses. Many

online sites such as Eyebuydirect, Zenni Optical, etc., have options to add a blue light option to your prescription glasses, therefore do not need to switch back and forth between your prescription glasses, and blue light glasses when working at your computer.

For all college students who are currently taking online classes, blue light glasses would be a fantastic addition to your life, and can help prevent a multitude of issues that arise from increased blue light exposure.



5 | Happiness During Covid

Gabby Christofor, Pinney ARM

The pandemic has been a hard time mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually for us all. It has been very easy to focus on the sad things that have been happening. The lonely moments seem to be endless if there is nothing to look forward to in the morning. Writing a list of things to do for the day will help you get up, have a positive outlook on the day, and feel productive by the end of it. Sometimes, though, if you're feeling really down, just getting up in the morning is enough and you should be proud of yourself.

If you ever need some tips as to what to do to stay happy during this time, please don't hesitate to talk to me. I will also outline the steps that I took over winter break to take control of quarantine and make it a time that brought some happiness.

At the beginning of quarantine, I would spend most days just laying in bed. I discovered some weeks in that this would not work for me. I needed to find motivation throughout the day, so I made a list. I made sure every day that I got some exercise, spent time with my dog, and had at least one good meal. Make a list that you are capable of adapting to and want to do every day. Then, you can add in special things to the list such as volunteering, going to the thrift store, or chatting with friends online. Below, I will list all the main categories of things that made me happy during this quarantine.



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Surprise yourself by writing [affirmations and] choose a new one to start each day. This will inspire you to show gratitude to others throughout the day as well.

”

First, exercise. Exercise comes in many forms. Exercise is not always the traditional run or gym visit. Gyms may not feel safe at this time anyway. Yoga, dancing, and walking your pet are each exercise. Hiking is an excellent way to get out of the house, be one with nature, move your body, and be socially distant. There are other ways as well that might not even seem like exercise such as cleaning the house, parking far away from a store, biking down a hill, or making a TikTok (those dances are tiring!). Have fun with it. Exercise helps get your mind off of the struggles of everyday life, and instead, you focus on the task at hand.

Take up some mindful activities. You can start a daily journal to write goals or simply jot notes down about your day. Starting the day with affirmations can brighten your day. Surprise yourself by writing them or printing them out, and then choose a new one to start each day. This will inspire you to show gratitude to others throughout the day as well. Dream journals are very interesting, too. Maybe you can make connections between your day/life with what occurs in your dream. Meditation is always very healthy for you. While we are talking about mindfulness, your mind needs a break! It works all day, so take a nap when you need it. Taking a couple moments a day to have silence and ground yourself calms the mind.

It's hard to have safe social interactions during Covid, so investigate some online apps to chat with others. Whether you prefer texting or video chatting, the internet can be a wonderful resource. My personal favorites are Zoom and Netflix Party. For Zoom, I have my own personal chatroom

and I can invite whichever friend I want to talk to me for the night. Watch parties are always a good time. It is so fun to have recommendations from friends of new movies or shows to start. It is like you're at the movies, but you're safe in your house, and do not have to pay \$10 for a bowl of popcorn.

Learn a new skill. I have seen so many people during quarantine discover a skill and capitalize off of it. Make money or help others by doing the things you love or look online for in-person or virtual volunteer opportunities. Learn to sew, knit, build, cook, etc. The list is endless. You'll be proud of yourself while looking at your art and know you did it all on your own. You can even make a list of things you have done and refer back to it to do them again in the future, such as starting a recipe book. This is also a great opportunity to spend time with family. Whether it is making a meal, crafts, or just taking pictures together, that quality time will always be remembered.

While it is easy on paper to suggest making a routine, I know it is difficult to find the motivation to get up at all sometimes. Please acknowledge that it is okay and normal to feel sad. The world is different than it ever has been. Be gentle with yourself and put yourself first. You are important. I hope that incorporating some of the things I listed into your day or week will drive you to happiness. You deserve all things good.



6 Putting Your Best Foot Forward

Tamia Scott, Grasso ARM



It has been a tough year for all of us. We understand that we are still amid a pandemic, and many people are learning in conditions that make them unable to do their best. I believe it is important to reflect on your past semesters to be at your best for future/present semesters. We must learn from our mistakes. Here are some things that I think are important to mention.

Time management can be a struggle. It takes a while to adjust to the pace and new schedule you have. Getting good grades can also be a struggle. I am here to say “don’t let grades define your worth as a student!” While grades are used as a marker to indicate how you are doing in a course, that doesn’t mean they’re a reflection of what you know. For example, some

students have test anxiety, which negatively impacts their scores. For this semester, encourage yourself to be more attentive in class, take better notes, review your notes everyday after school, organize your assignments, and overall, put everything into your studies. That way, you’ll prove your consistent work ethic and worthiness of a high overall grade, regardless of any test score you may receive.

It’s never too late to gain some extra points. Take some time to review what might have gone wrong this semester. Maybe you missed a vital assignment or didn’t do so great on the exam. Once you figure out what may be bringing down your grade, contact your teacher and discuss how you can improve. Do not be-

lieve that meeting with your teacher after grades are out is a waste of time. Getting down to the issue and discussing it with your teacher can definitely give you some clarity on where to go from there. The teacher may even offer you some extra credit options to alter your grade last minute or provide tips on how you can improve the next time.

Be proactive in making necessary changes! It’s not enough to learn from your mistakes. You **must** change your behavior. Be honest with yourself and figure out where you may have been at fault. It’s often hard for us as students to accept that fact that we could have done more to fight a low grade.

However, instead of sulking in our sadness,

be excited for change. If your last minute work has caused you to fall behind, improve next semester and do work a week in advance. If you missed assignments this semester, make sure to become extremely organized next semester so that it doesn’t happen again. This semester, use the university’s resources. The tutoring center breaks down information at a slower pace. Professors’ office hours allow you to speak one-on-one and attending shows your willingness to learn and get extra help. If you surround yourself with like-minded individuals, it only motivates you to try harder in the future. I hope this helps.



Combating Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.)

Lizzie Hinds, Litchfield ARM



Winter is scenic, right? Flurries, icicles, winter wonderlands surround us, in an ideal world. However, we do not live in an ideal world. The beautiful snow that some see is overshadowed to others by the bleak grey that fills the sky. The early sunsets are not just photo opportunities. They are also premature starts to darkness. For individuals who experience Seasonal Affective Disorder, also referred to as SAD or seasonal depression, the winter can be challenging. How do we fight back against SAD? There is no one answer, but a combination of multiple different factors that can help college students combat the common enemy of Seasonal Affective Disorder.

What is it?

As its acronym indicates, SAD is a form of depression that is directly related to the change in seasons. For many, signs of it begin in the fall and last through the winter months. An average of three million cases of SAD are recorded every year, making the seasonal challenge relatively prominent. Those who experience SAD often feel fatigued, a lack of motivation, loss of interest, and general sadness. At a quick glance, it presents as generic depression, however the timing of the signs felt is essential. They are often emphasized as it gets darker earlier and as the temperature drops. Additionally, SAD can bring forward difficult feelings from alternative experiences an

individual has had. Though daunting to think of managing, there are various treatments for SAD that can help individuals conquer the challenging experience.

Often debated is the condition's name. Formally known as Seasonal Affective Disorder, SAD has a variety of alternative names. For some, the word "disorder" is disliked and replaced with "depression". In lieu of a scientific name, it can also be casually referred to as the "winter blues". Ultimately, a name is not important. What takes precedence is the individual behind the name, and how to help.

What Helps?

There are several successful methods to help combat SAD. The first, and most popular, is light therapy. With the sun setting earlier and earlier in the day, people miss out on far more sunshine during our active hours in the day. To fight this, many people invest in light therapy. These therapy lamps provide a subtle and gentle reminder of our minds' need for brightness. For reference, Amazon sells therapy lamps starting at as low as twenty dollars, making a potential resource very accessible.

Also known to help certain individuals is medication. This can be a somewhat intimidating option for some, and must be done carefully. Upon consulting with a medical professional, or maybe even a few, medication may be a reliable decision. Chemical shifts can drastically help with coping through signs of depression, but this option simply is not meant for everyone. For some, a similar alternative is aromatherapy, which entails using scents to lift moods. Whether or not a person chooses this route is a personal choice, but the option to tap into this resource is typically accessible for many.

Additionally, countless individuals find talking to be extremely beneficial. Whether this is in a clinical setting or not is up to each person respectively, but engaging in any form of conversational exchange can work wonders. Many find that understanding their

thoughts comes as a result of talking about their experiences, and once this understanding is reached, growth can take place. For students at Western, this is a resource that can be found in abundance. In the simplest form, reaching out to a friend or to an RA can be of great comfort. Around campus, students can find therapeutic help through resources like Counseling Services and the Women's Center, among others. Person-to-person interaction alone can help with heavy emotions. When those interactions are regular, spirits are naturally lifted and improvement is found.

What About the Pandemic?

The Coronavirus pandemic adds a unique layer to the already multilayered universe of SAD. Classes are primarily virtual, we can't hug our friends, whether we're receiving or extending comfort, and many of the group activities we participate in are not running. This adds a pressuring feeling of isolation to the mix of additional obstacles that SAD presents. In response, we can turn our residence hall rooms into safe spaces, we can go for socially-distanced walks around campus, and we can take precautionary steps to stay in contact with our friends, even if it's virtually. We can use weighted blankets in lieu of a hug, and we can voice how we're feeling, because more than likely, those around us are feeling the same way. While COVID has certainly twisted the world around, there are ways to untwist the complications, therefore helping and protecting ourselves.

Seasonal depression is not taken lightly, in any way, but by helping ourselves, we can begin to feel our own lightness return. Western Connecticut State University has an array of resources to help combat SAD, and when used to the fullest extent needed, students can confidently say that they conquered their winter challenges. The snow may be piling on, the sun may be setting early, and the emotions may be complex, but the battle against SAD can be won by every individual.



There's some excitement in the air in HRL this spring!

When you've paid your deposit to return to campus for next fall (**due by March 20th!**), there's a new **ONLINE** process that we'll be using for room and roommate selection.

We've partnered with **Adirondack Solutions** and are rolling out its **THD** program through a new Housing Portal, where you'll be able to complete your applications and select your rooms and roommates – using your phone, tablet, or computer.

More information will be coming your way, so PLEASE look to your email and look around the building for information about this new system as we roll it out this spring! In the meantime, pay your deposit, and you'll be able to complete your application/contract shortly!

Just a reminder that the
Housing & Residence Life Offices

are now in Pinney Hall, suites C21 and C24.

Our phone numbers are the same, but you'll need to come to the Westside to see us!



Want to know more about campus resources and other advice to improve your academic life? You can check it all out on Gab & GROW, a podcast you can find here:

www.wcsu.edu/housing/gab-grow/



About *The Handout*

The Handout is a product of the Department of Housing & Residence Life at Western Connecticut State University. There are 6 editions each year, 3 in the fall semester and 3 in the spring semester.

The ideas for and execution of the articles are the work of the Academic Resource Mentors, or ARMs, who provide academic coaching and resource referral to all members of the WCSU residence community.