

# Academic Burnout

By Alex Taft

We all know the feeling. You're about halfway through your school day and you're already tired and ready to go home. You've completely clocked out, but still have multiple hours left to go until you're truly done for the day. When you finally do get home, you have a mountain of homework, and will manage to get the bare minimum recommended 8 hours of sleep if you're lucky. As a result, you're left feeling just as tired and worn out as you were the day before, and the cycle just continues on and on. This feeling is called academic burnout.

You're not alone if you're experiencing this feeling, as the *Washington Post* reports that a staggering 75% of high school students in a large test group, upon taking a survey to detect varying levels of academic burnout, reported feeling "often or always stressed" by schoolwork. The actual percentage of students who experience academic burnout across the nation could of course be different, as the 75% statistic originates from a test group, but the sheer number of students in the test group who reported having academic burnout still indicates that many students experience it nonetheless. So, why do so many students suffer from academic burnout? According to an academic study by a variety of scientists at China's Huazhong University of Science and Technology, the most probable answer is a lack of sleep. For the study, 757 adolescents aged 12-18 completed a survey focusing on various factors and areas of attention, such as mental health, to determine whether or not they suffer from some degree of academic burnout. After this, they were given another questionnaire, focusing more on determining how much sleep each participant gets. The results found that there was a mean correlation of over 0.90, which is almost a direct correlation, between amounts of sleep and academic burnout. Naturally, if one is overwhelmed with school, one is going to have less time to rest, as school work will have to take priority over getting to bed at a decent time.



Now we know what actually causes academic burnout, but how does one combat it? It's easy to say "just sleep more", but it isn't that easy. Steps have to be taken to *allow* for more sleep. An easy solution is simply small-chunking work; if you have a weekly assignment, absolutely DO NOT put it off until the last minute, and instead try to commit a small amount of time each day to completing it. By doing this, you allow yourself more consistent amounts of free time in each day instead of having some days

where you have all the time in the world and somewhere you have to stay up until 12:30 am reading and annotating *Their Eyes Were Watching God* for AP Lit (even I mess this stuff up!). These days of small-chunked work allow for a more consistent, as well as healthy, weekly sleep schedule.

But what if just getting more sleep isn't enough? Yes, lack of sleep is usually the main factor behind academic burnout, but that doesn't mean other factors don't play into it. As it turns out, a lack of social interaction may be a notable contributing factor to academic burnout, as expressed in the details of an academic study conducted by the Office of Multicultural & International Student Support & Engagement at the University of Iowa: "Both loneliness and learning burnout are related to negative psychological health, and there might exist a relationship between them" (Lin & Huang). In the study, it was found that overall, loneliness and academic burnout are in sort of a self-feeding loop, where loneliness creates more burnout, then the burnout creates more loneliness, allowing the loneliness to create even more feelings of burnout, etc. With this being said, there are accessible solutions to feeling less lonely, effectively smashing the loop. The University of the People, a non-profit university centered around education, suggests trying to establish good relationships with students and teachers. Establishing good relations with teachers and fellow students will make school feel like less of a chore that you have to sit through, and more like a fun social environment. Another way to get more social interaction is by joining an after-school club or sport. If you join a club or sports team, you're joining a group of people who all share at least one common interest with you in an environment where people are more forced to interact with each other. This will allow you to make more friends who share some of your interests in a more relaxing and enjoyable social environment. If you suffer from serious anxiety, however, simply putting yourself in more social situations, even in ones where other people share your interests, isn't so easy, and the best recommendation to combating feelings of loneliness may be professional help, such as having regular appointments with your school therapist.

Academic burnout is completely normal. Even the keenest of students will likely experience it at some point, whether it's because that math class you signed up for turned out to be more demanding than you'd think, or because you got swamped with a huge assignment from your English class, you still experience some degree of burnout. Although, armed with knowledge on how to fight back, it's time to burn the burnout!

