

Students' Stress Levels Worrisome

Rates higher than adults, considered unhealthy

By Zoe Trager

Staff Writer

Sophomore Maggie

King sits in her car in the school parking lot, with red rimmed eyes.

It's 3:15 and school's over for the day. But she still has swim practice, cheer practice, and a mountain of homework, all to finish before going to sleep tonight, hopefully before 1 a.m.

King sits in her car crying. She cries because she's frustrated, tired, and worn out. But she mostly cries because she is stressed.

"Crying is just what I do when I'm stressed. It's a way to release all the emotions I've built up," said King.

King's story is not uncommon. According to the 2013 study *Stress in America* by the American Psychological Association, teenagers are more stressed out than adults. In the online survey, about 3,000 teens and adults reported their stress levels based on a scale of 1 to 10. The average rate of stress for adults was 5.1, but the average for teenagers was 5.8. Both rates exceed the limits of what is considered healthy stress.

Students at St. Albert are just as stressed as the rest of the nation's teens.

"I'm probably regularly at a five or six," said junior Lucy Sundrup. "But on a really stressful day, I'm an eight or nine."

But the stress doesn't come from a particularly hard class or a single sport with many



Students hold their homework for the night. Homework can be one of the most stressful activities for a student. *Picture by Zoe Trager.*

practices. Students at St. Albert say their stress comes from everything they are involved in, and that all the classes and activities combined creates their stress.

"What stresses me out is trying to get homework done after a 3-hour practice and still getting to bed at a decent hour," said sophomore Reed Miller. "The sports I play have long practices and it's just a time dedication, plus teachers will give you a little homework, so that's not bad but when each teacher does that the homework piles up."

Junior Matt Fagan agrees.

"Just all of it gets pretty time consuming," he said.

A typical St. Albert student might be involved in a sport and take multiple honor classes, while doing other extracurricular activities, such as play or band.

"I'm involved in play, swim, choir, band, honor choirs, honor bands, cheer, Battle of the Books, honor classes, and I have a job," said King.

This can be a lot for one person to handle.

Konnie Schechinger, the guidance counselor at St. Albert, said she has seen a rise of stress in her 10 years of working at St. Albert.

"I have seen an increase in stress. I really believe it is the increase of social media and texting," she said. "Homework and cyber bullying are the most stressful things in a student's life."

According to the same 2013 study, teens also report sleeping an average of 7.5 hours a night, much less than the recommended nine or 10 hours.

St. Albert students iden-

tify with this.

“When I’m stressed, it’s probably about four or five hours of good sleep,” King said. “Sleep can also affect my stress. If I don’t do homework and I have to catch up because I got home late or had to get up early, I get stressed out.”

“My average during the week is about six hours, and on really bad days it’s four hours,” Sundrup said.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, not getting enough sleep can affect a student’s ability to listen, learn, or concentrate. This leads to more stress, which is just a never ending cycle for many students.

Students who lack sleep can struggle with depression, alcohol abuse, or drug abuse, according to a Swedish study.

Stress can also lead to physical illness, such as vomiting or fevers.

“If I’m really stressed out, I get super high fevers, but that doesn’t happen a lot,” said senior Michael Whitmore. “I have to be pretty stressed.”

“I don’t think stress makes me sick,” Sundrup said. “Sometimes when I don’t get enough sleep though I get stressed out and get headaches.”

Students who are stressed are more likely to develop mental disorders, especially major depressive disorder, according to a University of Texas study. This could cause them to abuse drugs or alcohol.

“I feel like when I don’t have any time to just stop and breathe I can’t think about what I really need to do,” King said. “The more stuff I have going on the worse it is. My anxiety worsens when I can’t focus on what I need to be doing or when I have stuff

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**- Maggie King,
sophomore**

coming up I know that I’m not prepared for.”

Yet, St. Albert students often blame themselves for the stress they have.

“I overcomplicate things and make them harder than they need to be. I procrastinate. I’m also a perfectionist, so that makes it hard,” said Sundrup.

“I do force myself to be involved in everything, so it’s my ambition and my thirst for recognition that’s doing it,” said King.

As for whether it’s St. Albert’s atmosphere that breeds stress, with most students taking honor classes and doing multiple extracurricular activities outside of school, students said the pressure of it all could definitely be cause for their stress.

“Yeah we have a lot more going on academically, but I think that the extracurricular stuff that everyone does is what can really get stressful,” Whitmore said.

“Sports, clubs, volunteer work, it all just piles up on top of the hard work we do during school hours.”

King said, “I feel if I went to a different school, I wouldn’t be so pressured to be so involved.”

It also comes down to the students and how they relieve their stress. Many students lack a healthy stress-relief method.

“I just focus on getting to the weekend,” Miller said. “What else can you do?”

Schechinger said when students come into her office with stress problems, she has them make a list.

“Write it out. What is stressing you out? Which one is stressing you out the most? What’s one or two things I can help you with and we can find a solution for,” Schechinger said.

She also recommended talking to teachers, especially if the stress is homework related.

“Talk to a teacher first. The teacher appreciates it and they’ll have respect in the future. They’ll do what they need to help you,” said Schechinger.

Students suggest simpler, in-the-moment ways of managing stress.

“Taking a minute to calm yourself down can really work well for me,” King said.

“Try to buckle down and fix it or just try to make light of the situation,” Whitmore said.

When it comes down to it, most people deal with stress on a daily basis. The key is keeping the stress under control, and finding healthy ways to relieve it.

The problem is that students can suffer from so much stress that it can be hard to even think about taking a break just to get rid of stress.

Yet, many students say that stress isn’t entirely negative in their lives.

“Not all stress is bad,” Whitmore said. “It feels good to push yourself and watch others push themselves and put something out to the world that you can be proud of.”