

December, 2011



## Staff

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### Upcoming Events:

**Study Day, Friday Dec. 16th**

**Finals, Dec. 19th-21st**

**Happy Holidays!!!**



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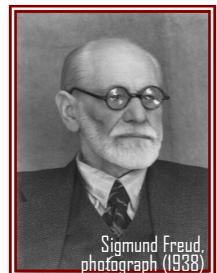
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# The Freudian Slip

CSB/SJU Psychology Department Newsletter

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University



Sigmund Freud,  
photograph (1938)

## **'Tis the Season of Stress**

**by: Erin Noel**

It starts with the turkey and apple pie at Thanksgiving. As soon as the tryptophan wears off, you are on to Black Friday shopping getting the best deals for everyone on your Christmas list, no matter what time of day or night.

Is it the lines, the crowds, or lack of sleep that makes holidays so stressful? Holidays are supposed to be a time of love and merriment, but depression, mania, and anxiety actually increase in intensity and frequency during the holiday season. Somewhere between finding the perfect gift, making the best holiday ham, and finding an outfit that is both stylish and comfortable (belt buckles always seem to fit a little tighter after our holiday meals), we become stressed.

What are we holiday goers to do? Ruth C. White, Ph.D., in her article in *Psychology Today*, suggests these following tips to ensure that you aren't this year's Grinch.

**-Make a budget. And stick to it.** Be realistic. There's no point setting a high budget that is out of line for your resources. If you really want to have fun at Christmas, be creative. Think coupons; whether you make a free baby-sitting coupon or use a \$15 dollar off coupon at the store (nobody will ever know that you bought their gift and saved too!), it's all about saving the little extras you can! These little savings can add up to big amounts. Don't forget to compare prices, and shop around online.

**-Start early.** Planning. Buying. Coordinating outfits

and schedules. Make to-do or to-buy lists. The moment things start getting crazy (and they will), we rush and forget things. This way as the anxiety ramps up, you can sit in calm as the chaos swirls around you.

**-Enjoy the food. But take it easy.** Our bodies let us know when we are having too much. When you feel full, stop. Ask for half of everything offered to you. Cut it in half. Share it with a friend. Taste a lot but don't eat a lot. Denial isn't fun so indulge but skip the greed option. You may not fully enjoy yourself and what all your parties have to offer if you cannot take your mind off the throbbing ache in your stomach.

**-Be physically active.** Do something. Anything. Have a snowball fight, make a snowman, or go on a walk (watch out for ice!). These activities can de-stress both you and your family. You do not need to do high impact work outs, just get up and move. If you are feeling adventurous, take dance lessons so you can show off at your holiday parties! Not only do you feel better after, but being physically active can lead to better quality of sleep and you may find you don't need to wear your adjustable waist line pants this year!

But above all, the most important tip is simple: **Sleep.**

One of the challenges during the holidays is the nonstop social engagements that leave us sleep-deprived (see the following article *Finals Week: Don't Forget to Sleep*). And the increased anxiety/depression/

stress also reduces our ability to fall asleep as well as quality of sleep. White says, "Sleep behaviors are on the list of symptoms for both depressive and manic episodes. Lack of sleep triggers bipolar symptoms and makes existing

symptoms worse". Keep to a bedtime routine and set a time to leave the party. Also, don't be hesitant to shut down the party at your house when it's past your bedtime.

In fact, it is not just important that we sleep during the holidays. White has found, "According to the National Institutes of Health, chronic sleep loss or sleep disorders may impact up to 70 million Americans (almost a 1/4 of the population) and cost up to \$16 billion in healthcare costs and \$60 billion in lost productivity". It is essential to not only our health, but our economy, that we give ourselves the best sleep we can get.

The goal of the holidays should not be to simply survive, but rather, to enjoy all that this magical time has to offer.

# Finals Week: Don't Forget to Sleep!

By: Rachel Heying

Finals. They're the inevitable culmination of the semester. With finals seem to come panic, stress, and sleepless nights accompanied by an ever-present steaming cup of caffeine. But are all-nighters really the best way to survive finals week?

Sleep is an incredibly important part of our lives. In fact, we spend close to a third of our lives asleep. Sleep keeps our minds sharp and our bodies healthy, so why do we so easily sacrifice those blessed 6 to 8 hours?

Psychologist Robert Stickgold believes that 6 to 8 hours is not only a healthy amount of sleep for one night, but it is actually required for proper learning. Learning doesn't only occur when we are awake; the hours we spend asleep are actually essential to form memories for learning. The brain requires that time to encode the new information and file it away so that we can retrieve it at a later time.

The first two hours of sleep are dedicated to slow-wave sleep (SWS). In SWS, the information

in our memory flows from the hippocampus to the cortex where long-term memories are stored.

During the next four hours of the sleep cycle, connections between nerve cells are strengthened as the memories are stored. If this sleep time is cut short, the memories are not fully stored and you are not able to remember all that you could have. The final two hours of good sleep are spent in rapid-eye-movement (REM) sleep, which is also essential for the learning process.

During this time, the brain runs through everything that it has stored that night, further strengthening the connections that make up the new memory. If less than six hours of sleep are obtained, the learning process suffers.

In an experiment at Harvard, Dr. Stickgold tested the importance of sleep in learning. Participants did a simple task: looking for specific targets on a computer screen, and pressing the appropriate button. Once they were fully trained in the task, students answered as quickly as 75

milliseconds. Then, Stickgold varied the amount of sleep participants got before retesting. The participants who slept for less than six hours did not improve in identifying the targets, but those who slept for more than six hours were able to identify them in 62 milliseconds or less.

So, throw out the belief that college students have to pull all-nighters to pass their finals. Getting a good night's sleep is essential for long-term memory, and will ultimately help you pass your tests!

In addition to getting proper sleep, here are a few other tips for surviving finals week:

**-Make a calendar** of all of your due dates, and put it somewhere where you will see it daily. Being able to see what is approaching makes it easier to prioritize. Plus, being able to cross items off after they are accomplished is a great feeling!

**-Create a schedule** of your days from the time you get up to the time you go to bed. By setting aside specific times for each assignment and

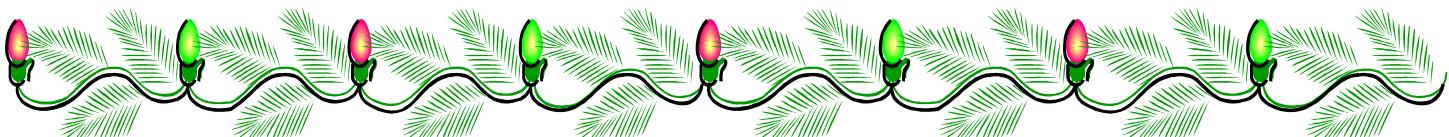
study session, you will ultimately save time. Be sure to include study breaks!

## -Arrange study groups.

Not only does this provide a change of pace from studying alone, but chances are you will learn more from your peers as new ideas and perspectives emerge.

## -Take care of yourself!

This is the most important thing you can do to make it through finals week with minimal stress. Eat healthy, exercise, take time to relax, and of course – get a good night's sleep! Best of luck on your finals!



# Psychology Jeopardy!!

Think you know  
EVERYTHING about  
Psychology?? Test your  
knowledge with these  
challenge questions in our first  
Psychology Jeopardy!!

- **1. In this type of illness, the physical ailment (such as peptic ulcers) is real, but the cause is believed mental.**
- **2. This Freudian term refers to all the instinctual desires and energies from the id, not just the sexual ones.**

**3. Shock researcher Walter Cannon coined this word for an organism's ability to maintain internal equilibrium.**

**4. Linguist who says the U.S. is a brutal imperialist state: Mona Chomsky (from the category scrambled eggheads).**

**5. This Russian physiologist published his first book, "Work of the Digestive Glands," in 1897.**

And the answers are:

- 5. Who was Pavlov?
- 4. Who is Noam Chomsky?
- 3. What is homeostasis?
- 2. What is libido?
- 1. What is psychosomatic?

Look for more Psychology Jeopardy questions in our next issue!!!

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## References

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### Finals Week: Don't Forget to Sleep!

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