IT’S MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

Talking about mental health and asking for help is more common than it used to be, but the stigma still stands. This issue takes an in-depth look into this national problem and the resources available for those who need it.

1 IN 3 COLLEGE FRESHMEN FACE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

SOURCE: AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

SPOTLIGHT

Understanding suicide loss survivors
‘Suicide ... is a public health concern. We all can get involved with supporting mental health’

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SPORTS

Hockey twins take bond to the ice
Keeping hockey in the family, brothers Cole and Christian Krygier bring an on-ice connection

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OPINION

Social media and body image issues
‘These desires to look like someone other than myself usually come from what I see on social media’

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Tips for beating the winter blues

Winter's here — the days are shorter, there's snow on the ground, the classwork increases and some students might find it harder to get out of bed. With no break at MSU until Thanksgiving, it can be difficult to stay motivated and healthy. Here are our tips for getting out of that winter funk.

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Resources: If you're experiencing low energy, trouble sleeping, fatigue, thoughts of hopelessness or other symptoms of seasonal affective disorder, there are resources on MSU's campus that can help. A list of some of these resources is on page 12.
Senior guard Cassius Winston (right) hugs Head Coach Tom Izzo after being subbed out against Binghamton. Winston’s brother, Zachary passed away less than 24 hours before tip. The Spartans defeated the Bearcats 100-47 on Nov. 10 at the Breslin Center. PHOTO BY MATT ZUBIK
How to report sexual misconduct: A step-by-step guide on disclosing to police

BY HANNAH BROCK

Reporting sexual misconduct in any form, whether for yourself or someone else, can be a confusing task. The first step in making the decision is understanding the process of criminal investigations, your role and how to go about reporting sexual misconduct.

REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

There are two ways the authorities can be notified about a case of sexual misconduct.

First, an individual may call the police department in order to file a police report.

“We’ll send a police officer out to their house, or wherever they want to meet,” East Lansing Police Department and ELPD, Deputy Chief Steve Gonzalez said.

On the other hand, if an individual goes to the hospital to receive a medical examination after an instance of sexual violence, authorities will be notified.

Hospitals are mandatory reporters, which means they are required to notify the Office of Institutional Equity, or OIE, or MSU Police, according to GIE’s webpage. The only MSU employees not required to report instances of sexual misconduct are those from MSU Safe Place, Olin Health Center, University Ombudsperson, MSU Employee Assistance Program, MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services, MSU Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention Team, MSU Sexual Assault Program, MSU Prevention, Outreach and Education Department and the 24-hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line.

However, the reports do not require an individual to follow through with a police report if they don’t want to, Gonzalez said. If you or someone you know would like to be medically treated without going to court, the police report, they will not be forced to.

The police officer or officers who are notified will arrive to the hospital and offer the opportunity to file a report, and if the individual does not want to, they will be given the proper contact information in case they change their mind at any time, Gonzalez said.

“All Michigan State employees are mandatory reporters and are obligated to notify the Office of Institutional Equity, or OIE, or MSU Police, according to GIE’s webpage. The only MSU employees not required to report instances of sexual misconduct are those from MSU Safe Place, Olin Health Center, University Ombudsperson, MSU Employee Assistance Program, MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services, MSU Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention Team, MSU Sexual Assault Program, MSU Prevention, Outreach and Education Department and the 24-hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line.”

In the hospital, the person will be given the proper contact information. The police officer or officer who is notified will arrive to the hospital and offer the opportunity to file a report, and if the individual does not want to, they will be given the proper contact information in case they change their mind at any time, Gonzalez said.

“T’ve found personally that people are a lot more comfortable when they’re at their home,” Gonzalez said.

The comfort of meeting with the police at an individual’s home allows for a friend or family member to be present for support.

Services for survivors are available for comfort and assistance through nonprofit advocates. Gonzalez said they can help an individual process what the police need to know for a thorough legal investigation and explain why, which can alleviate stress from reporting an instance of sexual violence.

THE INVESTIGATION

After a report is filed, the police will open an investigation. An individual may contact East Lansing or MSU authorities, and the police will determine where the incident occurred in order to allocate the investigation to the proper department, Gonzalez said.

An investigation into sexual violence can be very involved where there’s multiple witnesses to follow up with, Gonzalez said. The presence of a suspect’s attorneys and physical evidence recorded during an investigation due to the time it takes for the police to complete an investigation is case sensitive.

“It’s hard to put a typical timeline on an investigation because some can be very involved where there’s multiple witnesses to follow up with,” Gonzalez said.

Other factors that increase the time the police take in investigating a case of sexual misconduct include the presence of a suspect’s attorneys and physical evidence gathered during a medical exam, Gonzalez said.

An investigation into sexual violence is multifaceted and thorough, therefore the time it takes for the police to complete an investigation is case sensitive.

“The only MSU employees not required to report instances of sexual misconduct include the presence of a suspect’s attorneys and physical evidence gathered during a medical exam, Gonzalez said. An investigation into sexual violence is multifaceted and thorough, therefore the time it takes for the police to complete an investigation is case sensitive.”

Cases where the two parties are known to each other, as in the survivor and perpetrator, have quicker timelines for investigation, Gonzalez said. If there is not a suspect and physical evidence is necessary to proceed during an investigation, lab results can take anywhere from a year to 18 months, Gonzalez said.

ELPD Detective Traci Sperry exclusively works on sexual assault investigations.

“We have a backup detective that is trained in how to work these as well,” Gonzalez said.

Caseload is a factor in how long an investigation might take, but ELPD has multiple detectives dedicated to sexual assault cases.

THE INVESTIGATION TO PROSECUTORS

Upon the completion of an investigation, the case will be turned over to local prosecutors in order to determine if charges will be issued against the suspect. If charges are issued, this will begin the process of going to court for the instance of sexual misconduct.

“T’ve found personally that people are a lot more comfortable when they’re at their home,” MSUPD Capt. Doug Monette said. “We investigate them thoroughly.”

MSUPD provides campus and community-based resources for support during an investigation as well, Monette said.

An investigation into sexual violence is multifaceted and thorough, therefore the time it takes for the police to complete an investigation is case sensitive.

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Modernization program set to hit East Lansing within next two years

BY SARA TIDWELL
STIDWELL@STATENEWS.COM

East Lansing’s largest utility provider is seeking public input on its regional clean energy plan.

“The Lansing Board of Water & Light, or BWL, has committed to 30% clean energy by 2020 and 40% by 2030, meaning an 80% improved air quality and environmental health, as well as a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, by 2055. These goals stem from the utility company’s integrated resource plans. The latest plan, after a series of open houses, will be presented to the company’s board of commissioners in January 2020. These plans are management tools that compel periodic examination of customer demand for power and how to best meet them going forward, said Brandie Ekren, executive director of strategic planning and development for BWL.

BWL’s mission statement is to provide safe, reliable and affordable utility products and services throughout the greater Lansing region. BWL serves roughly three-quarters of East Lansing’s electricity. The other quarter is served by Consumers Energy. Most of the west side of the city is run and upheld by BWL, with the exception of a strip of land along U.S. Highway 127 and the Red Cedar neighborhood, East Lansing Council Member Mark Meadows said. East of Park Lake Road is served by Consumers Energy.

Ekren said every five years, BWL creates these plans as a common practice in industry, led by BWL employees with help from an industry research consultant.

THE NEW PLAN

“The residents of this area obviously want to see green energy investment and BWL is taking that into account. Especially because it is a public utility,” Mayor Pro Tem Aaron Stephens said. “There are members (on the board) that are just part of the community, so they are pushing that agenda on the board, and we are as well.”

After the board of commissioners hears the plan in January 2020, they could vote to approve it in July 2020, allowing implementation to begin in January 2022.

“BWL, presumably, will be moving towards 100% clean energy at some point. The university is at this point in time, the city is at this point in time,” Meadows said. “I would hope that they would actually accelerate those figures. I think that they can do better and I’m hoping that they will.”

BWL will add both wind and solar power to its renewable portfolio to reinforce its commitments.

“We want to encourage BWL to invest in their own (green energy),” Stephens said. “We want our city doing the things necessary to keep green energy here so we’re not producing it somewhere else. For us and for the majority of people who are going to move towards solar energy, it’s about producing your own. Then, when things are not operational (or) things are not being used, that energy is still being produced and might even be able to be sold back to the utility.”

East Lansing already partnered with BWL to install solar energy via a solar park which opened last spring. A second solar array is still in the works at the Department of Public Works & Environmental Services site on State Road and Coolidge Road.

“We have a whole set of plans to put solar on rooftops of city buildings ... and parking lots,” Meadows said. “We’re moving very rapidly towards our objective of 100% clean energy, taking care of any city services if not our citizens.”

Meadows said he does not know for certain if it will have an impact on the city, because they have already begun encouraging requirements tailored to the installation of green energy, green roofs and highly energy efficient buildings.

“I’m hoping that we can continue to push for it and then, when the technology catches up to us with batteries and solar power and other, I hope we just get to the point where we can start producing our own energy,” Stephens said.

EAST LANSING’S COOPERATION

The East Lansing City Council holds two non-voting seats on BWL’s board of commissioners, which includes eight appointed local citizens.

“The city of Lansing cooperates and works with them a lot more, but we have constant communication with them,” Stephens said. “Elected officials like myself go to meetings, talk to them about anything from constituent issues to tree removal to power lines.”

Stephens said in addition, the utility company does regular maintenance work as well as coordinates with the city to get information out to residents.

PAST VERSIONS OF BWL’S ENERGY PLAN

In 2016, BWL worked with a Citizens Advisory Committee to determine and implement its current strategic plan, which was set to assist moving BWL into becoming the state’s cleanest electric unit. This plan drives to end all use of coal by 2025 through the replacement of the aging Eckert Power and Erickson Power Stations with new, cleaner, more natural gas-fired power plants and a substantial increase in renewable power. The move is vitally important to the city’s development, allowing familiarity around the language of environmentally-friendly strategies, Stephens said.

“We are building a lot in East Lansing right now,” Stephens said. “These buildings are going to be around for a heck of a long time, so you can imagine that when the energy shift happens, these buildings will still be here.”

This plan is still being operated on and will be complete in December 2020.

“The city of East Lansing strongly wants this. The city of Lansing has illustrated that as well,” Stephens said. “They go, I think, further than DTE (Energy) and other energy sources.”

“We want our city doing the things necessary to keep green energy here so we’re not producing it somewhere else.”

Aaron Stephens
East Lansing Mayor Pro Tem

PHOTO BY ANNIE BARKER

The Otto C. Eckert Power Plant on November 12.
PHOTO BY CONNOR DESLIES

The East Lansing Solar Park on Oct. 22.
PHOTO BY ANNIE BARKER
In recent years, Michigan State has lost many students on campus to suicide — the second leading cause of death among college students, according to Active Minds, a nonprofit organization that advocates for mental health awareness and education.

“Suicide and mental health is a public health concern,” said Talitha Easterly, the assistant director for outreach, multicultural initiatives and student engagement at the MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services, or CAPS. “We all can get involved with being a part of supporting mental health on our campus and getting engaged in suicide awareness and prevention.”

Data from CAPS counseling screening for the 2018-19 school year shows that 44% of students reported some degree of suicidal ideation within a two-week period.

CAPS Director Mark Patishnock said there are a lot of factors that influence how students react to suicides happening in the university community.

“There’s varying degrees of public knowledge and awareness of these events in general,” Patishnock said.

Anna Tomlanovich, a member of the on-campus mental health group Project Lets, said there is always room for improvement when it comes to keeping the conversation going. She said every week should be Mental Health Awareness Week.

Mental Health Awareness Week, hosted by the Associated Students of Michigan State University, runs from Nov. 9 to Nov. 16, and aims to educate students and connect them to resources and support groups on campus.

“Mental health fluctuates all the time,” Tomlanovich said. “You can be someone that... never really experienced anxiety or depression or anything like that, but something in your life could change.”

Students are impacted by suicide both directly and indirectly.

“It’s definitely a great loss, whether you’re close to them, you’re in their community, in their friend group or not,” Tomlanovich said.

“You can be impacted in a lot of ways by suicide.”

Loss can be experienced directly by those who had a relationship with the individual or by those who knew of them. Indirect reactions are often triggered by past trauma or an unrelated loss that was previously experienced, Patishnock said.

“I think a lot of times, with the subject of suicide, it’s uncomfortable to talk about,” Tomlanovich said. “We don’t talk about it, but these lives should be talked about and should be honored because these are valuable lives that have been lost.”

LOSING SOMEONE TO SUICIDE

Neuroscience senior Kyrsee Tingstad is a suicide loss survivor.

“I struggle a lot with wondering what I could’ve done differently.”

Tingstad lost her brother — Bryan Earle Tingstad — to suicide shortly before moving to East Lansing while she was still a senior in high school. She received therapy the summer before coming to MSU as a freshman, but, she didn’t seek out on-campus counseling services until a couple of years into her college career.

“It takes the average person numerous years from the time that they start experiencing symptoms to when they actually ask for help,” Patishnock said.

It wasn’t until her senior year that she discovered MSU’s chapter of Project Lets. Project Lets is a national organization that offers peer support for mental healing, and aims to challenge the stigma associated with mental illness.

Tingstad began serving on the organization’s e-board at the start of the semester, and said she can’t help but stress the importance of finding a mental health support group within the community.

ONE IN FOUR STUDENTS HAVE A DIAGNOSABLE ILLNESS

OF THOSE ONE IN FOUR:

40% do not seek professional help

80% feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities

50% are so anxious they struggle in school

SOURCE: NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS
"I've been in that place where I didn't even realize it existed," Tingstad said. "I think there are a lot of students who would love to have a group like this, but don't even know that it exists, but they don't know that it exists."

In addition to Project LETS, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, or AFSP, provided Tingstad with a chance to connect with people who are also suicide loss survivors. Tingstad has spoken at an AFSP panel and is still involved with the organization.

"They just create this really safe space where you feel open to talk about it," she said. "One of the biggest things that makes it hard for me is that I feel like it's not something that's talked about enough."

Tingstad said she hopes a chapter of AFSP starts up on MSU's campus someday. To her, support from other suicide loss survivors was second to none.

"Those events were by far the most helpful thing — connecting with other people who understand exactly how you feel because dealing with losing someone to suicide is so different than any other kind of tragedy," she said.

Tingstad remembers her passion for mental health and her desire to get into advocacy was because of her brother, and that she is working toward becoming a licensed therapist.

"My career choices are completely centered around my experiences with my own mental health and what I experienced with my brother, and I care more about my own mental health because of watching what he experienced," she said. "I don't think that I would really see how important it was to take care of yourself mentally if I didn't witness first hand what can happen if you don't."

Tingstad remembers her brother for his love of reading, classic movies and music.

"I think that he belonged in the 1960s," she said. "I think that he should have been 23 years old in the 1960s just because of everything that he loved." He loved "The Godfather" and was obsessed with Stephen King novels.

Tingstad remembers the little things about him, and how peaceful his energy was.

"I think that all of those things are the things that really defined him — not the way that he passed," she said. "Those are the things that I remember about him."

SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

There are a variety of mental health resources here at MSU — from informal to formal, to immediate help and mobile access to after-hours crisis counselors.

If a student calls CAPS after regular hours, they are relayed to a crisis counselor. CAPS Connect is for day-to-day issues and is meant to serve as a non-traditional, drop-in and informal consultation alternative to full screening. CAPS Connect is a great way to gauge your mental health while becoming aware of what services are available, Easterly said.

David Gates, a full-time crisis counselor, was hired by CAPS May 2019. Gates specializes in providing immediate help. Gates does not have an ongoing caseload of patients — like other counselors at CAPS do — and instead meets with individuals who are in crisis.

Gates is based at Olin Health Center, but he can reach students who are unable to commute to Olin via a mobile unit.

"It is hard to predict when a crisis will develop, and having one person who is a specialist in this position with dedicated weekly hours to meet this need is a positive addition to the organization," Gates said in an email.

Currently, CAPS is looking to hire a critical incident response coordinator to fulfill this role in the evenings, weekends and if there is a campus tragedy.

"There's typically a process where we try to deal with it ourselves, we go to friends or family ... sometimes counseling may not be the first, immediate step that someone takes," Patishnock said. "I generally know and trust that they're getting some degree of service, they're getting accessed, they're gonna get connected. I tend to be more worried and more concerned about the students who aren't coming in."

Gates said he encourages students to take advantage of the services they need, and that there's no judgement. He said everything that is discussed in counseling is confidential.

"I want to dedicate my own life to helping other people, even if I can just save one person that feels the way (my brother) felt," Tingstad said. "Then that would all be worth it."

"YOU GO THROUGH A LOT OF EMOTIONS BECAUSE YOU FEEL LIKE THAT PERSON CHOSE TO LEAVE YOU. I STRUGGLED A LOT WITH WONDERING WHAT I COULD'VE DONE DIFFERENTLY."

KYRSEE TINGSTAD
On losing a loved one to suicide

67% of college students first tell a friend they are feeling suicidal before telling anyone else

SOURCE: ACTIVE MINDS
You’ve heard it before from sports journalists and broadcasters around the world: “They have the ‘it’ factor.”

What is the “it” factor? It’s having that innate ability to be special. When athletes possess “it” and step on the field or on the court, it just feels like something great is going to happen.

Players at Michigan State like Kirk Cousins, Mateen Cleaves, Earvin “Magic” Johnson and many others have possessed this intangible trait. The next in line to have that innate ability is East Lansing native and starting combo guard Taryn McCutcheon.

Standing at a meager five-foot-five-inches, McCutcheon does not show fear on the court. She drives fear into the heart of her opponent. “I always try to bring a lot of energy. I think that our team needs a defensive spark sometimes, and I think that really helps with the energy,” McCutcheon said. “I just really try to give my all. Momentum plays, take charges, dive on the floor for loose balls to get the crowd into it.”

That energy she brings has caused havoc for the Spartans’ opponents over the years, as last season she averaged 1.9 steals per game and already has four steals in just two games this season.

Not only does she hustle and make plays on the defensive end of the floor, her offensive game is dynamite. So far in her career, McCutcheon has shot a scorching 38% from behind the arc. Her three-point shooting has been the backbreaker for many of her opponents, including a step-back three that ultimately sealed the deal for an upset win over then-No. 3 Oregon last season. It was also her play against the Eastern Michigan Eagles in the season opener that ignited the Spartans’ explosive 52-3 third quarter. “What Taryn did in the second half there, coming out the gates and knocking shots down ... and even getting some offensive rebounds ... I thought she really ignited us,” Head Coach Suzy Merchant said.

Her impressive play for the green and white last year earned her All-Big Ten team status, but that hasn’t stopped her from using this last offseason to take her game to the next level. This offseason, she decided to go back to her roots and work with her father, Jason McCutcheon, who also played college athletics. “I came in a lot more on my own than usual. I brought my dad in, and I think that helped me go back to when I used to work out with him when I was younger. I think that brought a little bit of that joy of the game back,” McCutcheon said.

McCutcheon is listed as an East Lansing native on the roster, but she’s actually from West Virginia, where during her junior year of high school, she won West Virginia Player of the Year. However, when she did move to East Lansing her senior year of high school, she said she immediately felt like she was at home. “I felt like this community really took me in. I felt like it was home even though I hadn’t necessarily even grown up here,” McCutcheon said.

The Spartan community has an obsession for basketball, and not just for the highly-achieving men’s team. Women’s basketball games at the Breslin ranked in the top ten last year in attendance, and Taryn has fallen in love with the atmosphere the fans create. “Just the way that these fans are, it’s just a different kind of atmosphere. They really know who you are, and they really care for you as a person and as a player,” McCutcheon said.

Senior year can be tough for any college student, let alone one that has to deal with the trials and tribulations of a college basketball season, but Taryn is taking it in stride. “It’s kind of hard to think that this is my last shot at it. ... I think that really adds to the fire that we have this year,” McCutcheon said. “We haven’t gotten as far as we wanted to in the past. ... We all are in agreement that we want to do something big this year.”

As her time at MSU starts to come to a close, it is only a matter of time before the “it” factor that the East Lansing native possesses will come out and prove huge for the Lady Spartans, and it will likely be in the form of her trademark step-back three. “I really want to go out as best I can and make this community proud.”
Talking to one means talking to both, Krygier twins take special bond to Munn Ice Arena

BY JAYNA BARDAHL JBARDAHL@STATENEWS.COM

Playing defenseman for the Spartans are two 6-foot-3, 188-pound, left-handed shooters who play a physically-demanding game and have rarely seen the ice without each other: twin brothers Cole and Christian Krygier.

“If you’re talking to one, you’re talking to both of them. That’s kind of how it is,” Head Coach Danton Cole said.

Danton Cole even admitted when watching film, he doesn’t attempt split the twins up.

“If it’s (No.) 8 or (No.) 15, I just tag it and bring them both in and they can go through it because they tend to live everything together,” Danton Cole said. “They do have that bond that twins do and it’s an interesting thing. I think it’s an advantage for them.”

“They don’t attempt split the twins up,” Head Coach Danton Cole said. “They do have that bond that twins do and it’s an interesting thing. I think it’s an advantage for them.”

Danton Cole acknowledged the boys’ growing maturity as an improvement they have made from last year as true freshmen. Christian described him and his brother as being “both big and physical” on the ice. In just their second year with the Spartans, Cole has totaled 196th overall by the New York Islanders, while Cole went 201st to the Florida Panthers.

Both were selected in the 2018 NHL draft. Christian was picked 196th overall by the New York Islanders, while Cole went 201st to the Florida Panthers.

“It was pretty special,” Cole said, reflecting on the day. The elder brother, who was ranked No. 216 among North American skaters by the Central Scouting Bureau, said he actually turned the draft off during the 6th round, not expecting any big news.

“It was just pasting,” Cole said. “I actually went to go shower because it was later in the day and then I got a call from one of my buddies that said I was picked. It was kind of a cool moment.”

The brothers went through their separate ways, attending training camp for their respective NHL teams before meeting again in their new college home of East Lansing at the end of that week.

FROM PLAYING APART TO PLAYING TOGETHER: LOOKING AHEAD TO THIS SEASON

Last season, Christian was hesitant to put the twins out together, but now, as sophomores, the defensive pair has matured and sees the ice as a duo more often.

“After playing a full year, two years ago together, and then taking last year off and then coming back this year, we really haven’t skipped a beat, so I think it’s been really good,” Christian said. “I think we are physical together and we enjoy playing together.”

Danton Cole acknowledged the boys’ growing maturity as an improvement they have made from last year as true freshmen. "They've progressed really well," Danton Cole said. "They still have their moments where you can see the youthful exuberance where they kind of get out of position, but they've just really grown in that. The position of defense is an interesting one because there are so many reads and if you try and force things and not let the game come to you, you can really get in trouble and that's hard to play against. We are going to make it tough on the other guys.”

Christian described him and his brother as being "both big and physical" on the ice. In just their second year with the Spartans, Cole has totaled up 19 blocks with Christian just ahead at 20.

“We like to have a mean type out there,” Christian said. “I just think we are puck and wing (defense), so, shut it down and keep it calm out there so that our offense can do the work.”

Cole referenced a similar toughness when describing the pair's playing style. “I'd say we are going to be hard defensively,” Cole said. “Consistently throughout the games we are going to be hard to play against. We are going to make it tough on the other guys.”

Last season, Cole made some offensive moves as well, scoring his first career goal to break a 2-2 tie with Minnesota, helping the Spartans sweep the series.

"I'd say offensively we'll get the puck going, moving our feet and then see what happens," Cole said.

The twins have proven themselves to be impact full players on the Spartans’ roster. Christian said this year, he and his brother are looking forward to having a “solid year.”

“I think this is a big year for both of us being sophomores and having such a big role on this team and being able to play together being so young. So I think just kind of growing and having a really big year,” Christian said.

From left: Cole (8) and Christian (15) Krygier are pictured at practice Nov. 5 at Munn Ice Arena. PHOTO BY MATT SCHMUCKER

Freshman left defense Christian Krygier (15) checks a player during the game against Ohio State University at Munn Ice Arena on Jan. 4, 2018. The Spartans defeated the Buckeyes 8-7 in double overtime. STATE NEWS FILE PHOTO
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Mental Health

Social Media Shaped and Worsened My Body Image Struggles

By Kaitlyn Kelley
KKELLEY@STATENEWS.COM

It’s been years since I’ve battled an eating disorder, but I still struggle with body image issues on a day-to-day basis. I still seem to fall into an endless spiral of negativity when it comes to my appearance. Luckily, I am now able to identify these negative thoughts and not engage in the bad habits that used to take over my life. Anxiety and depression are still present, but they’re manageable.

Unfortunately, I wasn’t surprised to discover that just about all of my friends — primarily my female-identifying friends — have also experienced body image issues. Like me, they’ve felt like they weren’t pretty enough or skinny enough or fashionable enough. And I hate that they’ve also had to feel like they aren’t enough. It’s almost impossible to escape feeling this way when it comes to my body image, you’re not alone. What we see on social media is often filtered. Brands, public figures, our friends and acquaintances — they get to choose what others see on their accounts.

While going through my eating disorder in high school — at the same time social media platforms like Instagram were becoming more and more popular — I stumbled upon a campaign that made me feel less alone. The Aerie Real campaign doesn’t photoshop or “touch up” their models. And their models don’t all look the same — they have different body types, different races, different ethnicities and different ages. They have stretch marks and scars. They have acne and freckles. They exhibit everything we’ve been told as women isn’t ideal or beautiful, yet are.

Campaigns like this one are much needed. But, again, they’re not what we’re usually exposed to. And we still have a long way to go in terms of fostering a culture that encourages people to love themselves for who they are.

To everyone who’s struggled with self-love and body image, you’re not alone. There are too many of us to count, which says a lot about how problematic the beauty standards all over social media are.

Like I said before, I come to believe that feeling entirely comfortable in my own skin is impossible. But I’ve become much more appreciative of who I am and how strong I’ve become after going through the struggles I’ve had to go through.

My mental health is important to me. It took me a while to make it a priority, but I finally have. My confidence in myself might never be perfect. But is anything ever perfect?

Illustrations by Daena Faustino
Mental Health Awareness Week aims to “release the stigma around mental health, educate students on resources available to them, and continue to advocate for increased mental health resources on campus.”

This year, there are several new events and elements to raise awareness of mental health in the campus community.

The Associated Students of Michigan State University, or ASMSU, kicked off the second-annual Mental Health Awareness Week Nov. 11. ASMSU collaborates with other student groups on campus and MSU departments for the week to bring more ideas to the table and to foster a greater collaboration throughout campus.

This initiative entails several different events throughout the week that try to “shed light and increase awareness of mental health.”

Some of the events this year include “Release the Stigma: Focusing on Multicultural Communities,” “Embrace the Rain,” a candlelight vigil at the Rock on Farm Lane, “Positive Affirmation Day” and more.

“It’s just so important that (students) know that we are here for them. Even just to provide some-thing as simple as a shirt or a water bottle, it just might make someone’s week,” Red Cedar Log Editor-in-Chief Helen Korneffel said. “I just think it’s important that we help release the stigma.”

Mental Health Awareness Week is a way to bring the community together and evaluate how to improve wellness and mental health resources on campus, Liaison for Health, Safety and Wellness for ASMSU Kumaran Arivoli said.

“We shouldn’t go to college and solely focus on stress,” Arivoli said. “College should be a place where we are well, and that seems like such a foreign concept to us. I think that should be a huge part of going to college, is being happy and so many students aren’t happy. So, that’s why it’s so important to have a week like this.”

In order to bring more awareness this year, ASMSU has more online shareable features and promotions on social media, as well as new events like “Break the Stigma: Mental Health in Multicultural Communities.”

Mental Health Awareness Week was original-ly held in the spring semester last year, but has since been moved to a more appropriate time of year, Arivoli said.

As a senior this year, Arivoli said he tried to create a more unique week and create new events. He said he hopes Mental Health Awareness Week continues to spread the same important message in new, creative ways in the years to come.

“I think it’s really important to at least make this a unique week. I didn’t want to do exactly what we did last year,” Arivoli said. “For the person who follows my job next year, I’m going to make sure that they have their own ideas and come up with some really cool things. … I think updating mental health and its multiple facets is a really, really good idea to keep this going on in the future.”
Surrounding myself with friends is essential to my emotional well-being

BY KARLY GRAHAM
KGRAHAM@STATENEWS.COM

I'm a person who needs to be kept busy. If I'm alone and bored, I fall into a long, seemingly never-ending spiral of thoughts. Thoughts that can begin in any direction and eventually result in feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

When I got to college, I found there were endless opportunities and activities that could help distract myself from these negative thoughts and feelings. Since the time I graduated high school, I've picked up a lot of hobbies. Now, I bullet journal, attend multiple concerts a month, knit, and do pretty much anything else I can to keep my mind active.

I have a carefully-crafted schedule to keep myself busy. Monday nights, I visit the Michigan State University with my friends and study afterwards. Wednesday, I visit open mic night. Thursday nights, I go to meetings for a club I'm in and then have friends over to catch up on whatever mediocre reality TV show we're watching together at the time.

At school, I have fewer excuses to just lie down and watch Netflix all night. Don't get me wrong, I'm still the queen of binge-watching, but now I do it with friends instead of alone. "Gossip Girl" is a much better show when you watch it with other people who can hear your complaints about the characters (Jenny is the worst, you can't change my mind).

Just because I have distractions now doesn't mean my mental health problems are cured. I still find myself being sad sometimes. Just last month, I left my room a little after midnight only to return around 3:30 a.m. after having a really good, long cry in the basement of my dorm.

It seemed like the second I packed up my things and moved into my dorm freshman year, everything back home started going bad. With health problems plaguing my family, I feel immense feelings of guilt for being at school instead of being with them. As my dog ages, I worry that he'll pass away before I can say goodbye. As some of my closest friends are going through the same struggles with their mental health, I feel remorse for choosing a school so far away from them. Sometimes, when I think about these things, I just feel scared. Small, vulnerable, trapped and scared. Things seem bad all the time, but despite this, I find it easier to celebrate the little things.

I make it to class when I have the option to skip. I go to the library when the option to lay on my futon is so much easier. I visit whatever event UAB is hosting in hopes of watching YouTube videos in bed. While some people think distractions hinder their productivity, I rely on them to make it through my time at MSU.

A third of us are affected by anxiety and depression are still taboo. And mental illnesses are still present. And mental illnesses improved in recent years, but it's still difficult for people of all ages. It provides psychiatric assessment and medication management.

As we celebrate yet another week that aims to bring awareness to the issue of mental health, we should take into consideration how prevalent that issue is in society and on college campuses. This Mental Health Awareness Week, there should be dialogue surrounding how it affects their lives and how it impacts their academic performance.

The stigma associated with seeking help for mental health problems has improved in recent years, but it's still present. And mental illnesses beyond anxiety and depression are still taboo.

We think it's a good thing that people are more open to conversations surrounding mental health. But there are still improvements to be made, especially in the classroom and other educational environments.

As students, we're bound to go through things that prevent us from performing at our best. We might be too afraid to reach out to our professors for help during these times. Or we might end up reaching out to our professors only to have our struggles brushed off and be turned away. Either situation hurts.

Students don't want to perform poorly in class. We aren't paying thousands of dollars and dedicating hundreds of hours in an attempt to get a degree just to fail.

According to CollegeStats, 80% of college students feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities as students, while 50% of college students have rated their mental health as below average or poor. Additionally, 30% of college students reported they had problems with coursework due to their mental health issues.

Sometimes students have to miss class because they don’t feel well — maybe they have a cold, maybe they’re having massive anxiety. Both reasons are okay. But both reasons aren’t always treated the same by professors.

This means mental health in the classroom still isn’t entirely respected or normalized. If we’re overwhelmed, we’re told everyone else is, too. We’re essentially told to try harder and to move on from our problems because everyone has them.

A third of college freshmen experience mental health issues, according to Psychology Today. That’s a large proportion of students walking on this campus. Whether they’re students who are dealing with one of the biggest transitions in their lifetimes or they’ve been dealing with mental health problems for a while now, every student deserves to be felt respected by their instructors.

Professors should reach out to students who aren’t showing up to class or doing well — especially in smaller, more intimate classrooms. Professors should support the students who show up to their office hours and express concern about their performance moving forward. Professors should recommend resources, or at least take students’ stories seriously.

Again, students would rather not be struggling in the course and it’s very difficult to tell a professor that you’re struggling as their student.

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