



Senate Bill 2380 And How It Affects Your Student Loans

by Matthew Medina

Students are painfully aware of how expensive education can be. Tuition, books, accessories and tools altogether financially burden many students. A student's federal Pell grant is often not enough to cover the cost of education. Reluctant students are forced to rely on student loans.

The Obama administration put in place safeguards to quell some of the loan servicers' predatory tactics. However, President Trump's administration gutted these protections. As a result, states have created their own protections. As of last year, the

Massachusetts Senate passed Bill S.2380, protecting its students. The bill establishes a student loan Bill of Rights, based on S.129, which was drafted by Senator Eric P. Lesser and supported by Attorney General Maura Healey. S.2380 protects students from deceptive loan practices. Additionally, the bill mandates that an ombudsman oversees students' complaints, paid for by loan servicers.

The bill will likely face challenges moving forward; however, loan servicers say they want to work with states, but that they must follow federal mandate.

Proponents of the bill argue that states have an obligation to consumer protection.

Federal intervention is probable. According to *The Boston Globe*, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has "singled out efforts in Massachusetts," in response to AG Healey suing Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA). Healey alleges the agency deceived students. The PHEAA sued Connecticut for establishing similar protections for students.

Students concerned about affording their education may wish to follow how the federal govern-

ment and loan servicers respond to S.2380. ¶

Sources: "State Lawmakers Propose to Regulate Student Loans — All but Inviting a Lawsuit," by Matt Stout, published in *The Boston Globe* on 6 February 2019.

Student Loan Giant Sues Connecticut over its Crackdown on Student Debt, written by Jillian Berman, published in *MarketWatch* on 8 April 2018.

"Massachusetts Senate Passes Student Loan Regulations, Setting up Clash with Trump Administration," by Shira Schoenberg, published in *MassLive* on 11 April 2018.

"An Act Establishing a Student Loan Bill of Rights," signed by 191st General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on 29 March 2018.

Marijuana and Depression

by Sophie Markham

I recently stumbled upon a Facebook post written by an old friend from high school. He was curious to see if depression is linked to the use of marijuana. It's an interesting topic to discuss considering how marijuana is widely popular amongst teenagers. Within the last year alone about 40% of seniors and 15% of 8th grade students have used marijuana.

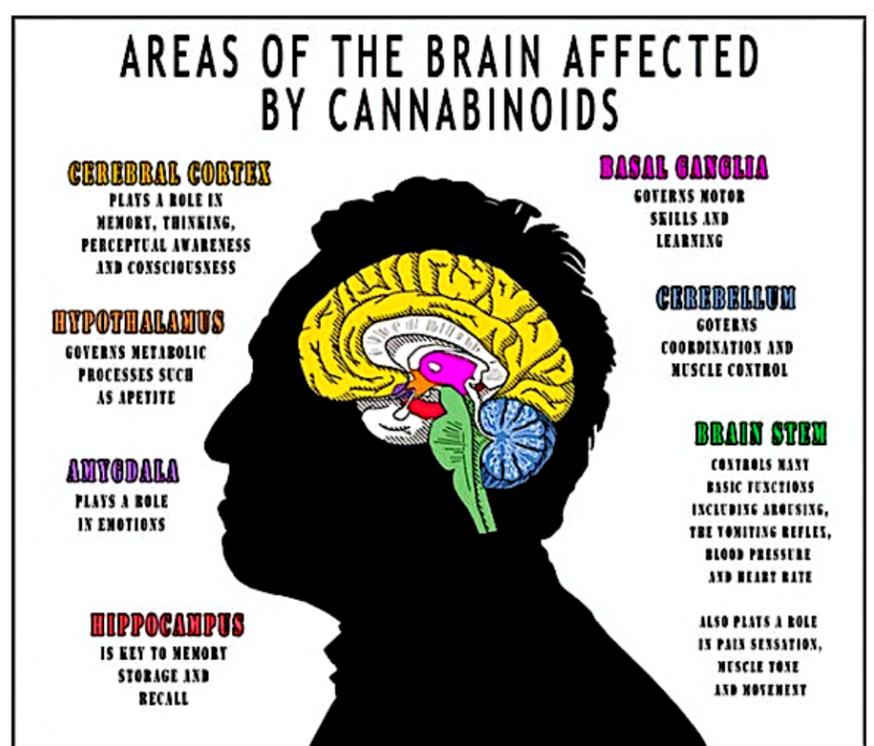
Let's start off with a basic knowledge of marijuana. The effects vary from person to person. Some marijuana users may feel relaxed; others may feel a strong affect due to the type of environment they're in, and some may experience a distortion in their reality. Marijuana is considered a soft drug. The effects aren't terrible, and it isn't shown to produce addiction unless you're a heavy user. However, at that point, your immune system has a chance of being affected making it harder to fight off germs which put stress on the heart. It is possible that heavy users may suffer from cancer and any related lung diseases due to the smoke.

Depression on the other hand is a mental health disorder that is characterized by depressed moods and lack of interest in daily

activities, which can cause a drastic change in the daily life. According to USNews, 63% of those 12 to 17 years of age have been diagnosed with clinical depression; a percentage that has risen from 2013 to 2016.

Now let's mix the two together. A teenager dealing with early signs of depression would want an easier way out from the pain and may or may not lean to marijuana for help. The reaction out of the use for someone with depression could either be positive or negative. According to Colorado State University which conducted a survey on 178 marijuana users, those aged 18–22 had more symptoms of depression than those who are not chronically depressed, and are non-marijuana users.

In some cases, marijuana has been suspected to trigger other types of mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, delusional disorder, bipolar disorder and other forms of psychosis. A majority of those who do suffer from depression tend to depend on marijuana to cope with their symptoms. As reported by The National Institute on Drug Abuse, the amount and dependency of the substance helps influence the connection of marijuana and depression.



This figure shows the areas of the brain with high concentrations of cannabinoid receptors, and their respective functions.

Source: www.publichealthwatch.wordpress.com/2015/02/09/medical-marijuana-a-new-frontier-in-depression-treatment/

According to a recent study, the AKT1 gene (also known as the Schizophrenic gene) helps regulate dopamine throughout the brain and when it is altered, the likelihood of schizophrenia is increased. This research found that the risk of psychosis was 7x more likely in those who were daily marijuana users.

In conclusion, it is unclear whether the marijuana use is linked to depression. With the help of the legalization of marijuana and the increase in smoke shops and dispensaries across the United States, there are more likely to be more studies for answers. ¶

Sources: Johnston et. al 2014, drugfreeworld.org, drugabuse.gov, mayoclinic.org, universityhealthnews.com

Majestic Lions Meet Humans

by Aymen Saaedi

The lion, also called Panthera Leo, is the largest cat in Africa. The cat is known as the “King of the Jungle” but faces threats that could exterminate their population. In just 25 years, the lion population has decreased by over 40 percent and has been declared vulnerable for extinction since 1996.

Research shows that by 2035 the lion population could decline by as much 50 percent, which would place them on the endangered list. The lion decrease in population has been attributed to one major factor, humans. One of the more obvious reasons for the decline in population is poaching, the illegal killing or catching of an animal. Poachers kill lions for many reasons, such as trophy killing, money, and medicinal use. Although it is legal



Source: <https://greatzoo.org/lions>

for commercial hunters to kill and trade the animal under the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species, hunting lions could also have its benefits, for example some hunter clubs raise as much as \$1 million dollars from auctions that go into animal conservation foundations.

Habitat loss is another factor attributed to humans. Lions have shown a large decrease in territory because of human growth rate in population and agriculture, which force the lions to search for food where humans store and nurture their livestock, which ends in the killing of the lion to protect the livestock. In Africa, most countries have weak economies, so a hit on a farmer’s livestock could be huge blow in their income. In Kenya, the gross income per capita is around \$1,100, and an average predation of livestock of a lion would cost a rancher about \$290 a year.

Scientists and foundations are researching and using data to provide the best solution to the problem, like using GPS trackers on lions in different regions to monitor health, location, interac-

tion, habitat use, and behavior to utilize in their research to find ways to prevent the population from extinction.

Lions are majestic creatures that need to be preserved, but in order for that to happen humans have to find a way to give animals a chance at survival. Limiting deforestation and habitat loss would not only increase the chances of normal food chain activity, but also increase the survival chances of other animals as well as lions. †

Sources: <https://www.awf.org/wildlife-conservation/lion/>; <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/african-lion-populations-could-be-cut-in-half-by-2035/>; <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/extinction-countdown/african-lion-populations-drop-42-percent-in-past-21-years/#googDisableSync>; <https://www.hoover.org/research/how-hunting-saves-animals>

Can a Parakeet be the Right Pet for You?

by Ayat Mahdi

Are you looking for a pet that is smart, talkative, low-maintenance, and inexpensive? Well, a parakeet (also known as budgie) might just be what you are looking for.

A parakeet is a type of parrot. Some parakeets, especially males, can imitate sounds just like any other type of parrot! They make very good pets as long as they have the attention and love they need. They are great for beginners. Parakeets come in over a 100 color forms, but primarily in green (typical in the wild), and in various shades of blue, white, gray, and yellow. The life expectancy of the average healthy parakeet is 15–20 years.

Parakeets are one of the most low-maintenance pets ever. All you need to do on a daily basis is to provide them with fresh food and water (after washing the feeders); change the cage liner, and spend at least an hour with them.

According to the Bird Cage Guide, 20% of a parakeet’s diet should be based on a seed mix and 80% on veggies, fruits, and pellets to provide the optimum nutrition. Remove any uneaten food after a couple of hours. Some foods that should never be given to parakeets are avocado, any fruit seeds, chocolate, coffee, processed sugar, dairy, oily and spicy foods. Cuttlebones are also necessary for added calcium and to keep the budgie’s bill trim.



Source: <https://animals.mom.me/difference-between-parrot-parakeet-5915.html>



Toys are incredibly important to the mental and physical health of parakeets. They should have an average of five colorful toys in their cage. More toys are required if you have a habitat for them at home. Interacting with a toy not only stimulates their minds, but keeps them active and engaged physically. Keep in mind that birds were made to be active and physically move and fly around, not just sit on a perch in a cage all day.

If you want to bond with your parakeets and keep them stimulated and happy, you can even teach them to talk. Parakeets are great mimics that love to speak in the language of their flock, whether that flock consists of other birds or humans like you. Learn how to train parakeets to talk by visiting:



Sources: <https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/adoption/parakeet-budgerigar-care/>; <https://myanimals.com/health/care-and-well-being/bird-care-parakeet/>; <https://www.petco.com/shop/en/petcostore/product/bird/live-birds/blue-parakeet>

www.wikihow.com/Teach-Parakeets-to-Talk.

Parakeets are really great pets! If you are planning on getting a parakeet, please adopt from shelters and other people. Avoid purchasing from pet stores because most do not really take good, healthy care of their parakeets. †

Sources: Insurance Information Institute. “Facts + Statistics: Pet Statistics.” III, www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-pet-statistics. “Bird Care Guide: Parakeets (Budgies).” MSPCA-Angell, www.mspca.org/pet_resources/bird-care-guide-parakeets-budgies/. “Toys Should Be A Part Of A Pet Bird’s Life.” The Spruce Pets, TheSprucePets.com/why-toys-important-for-pet-birds-4061430. Elliott, Pippa. “How to Teach Parakeets to Talk.” WikiHow, WikiHow, 19 July 2018, www.wikihow.com/

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Video Games & Mental Health

by Jose Martinez

Did you know video games could benefit you? Ever since video games were first made in the early 1970s they began to rise quickly in popularity. As the new form of entertainment became more mainstream, health professionals around the world have become increasingly interested in how it affects the developing brains of children and young adults. Video games are essentially tricking the risk vs. reward system, which releases the neurotransmitter known as dopamine.

A study published by Nature in 1998 shows the correlation between happiness and dopamine. The study had 22 Stanford students play a simple video game while wearing brain scanning equipment. The results showed a large amount of stimulation

in the pleasure centers of the brain, along with areas of perceptual awareness and motor memory. David J Linden, Ph.D. compares the release of dopamine to cigarettes in his article "Video Games Can Activate the Brain's Pleasure Circuits", to be very similar. Linden also believes that the larger ratio of males to females in video games is related to the innate territorial instincts of males.

These games are designed to make the player complete an objective. Once the objective is completed, the game presents the player with a digital reward that will make the player feel satisfied, and in turn makes your brain produce happy chemicals. This is why many gamers today pledge a significant portion of the day to fulfilling the ritual, and why

many parents fear that their children are spending too much time on the screen.

Despite the negative observations towards video games, there are several research facilities that focus just on the medical benefits brought on by video games, and prove that exercise improves many areas of the brain.

A study published in 2009 by Matthew Dye shows consistent results in cognitive improvement in those who play video games. Gamers are more likely to have much better spatial awareness and improved critical thinking skills. According to Peter Gray, a Ph.D at Boston College, gamers are also less likely to suffer from depression as the dopamine brought by playing video games is often enough to keep the mind in a healthy attitude. If video games

are played in "regulated short sessions of two hours, the brain will experience a 'work out' in all areas of cognition and improve mood for the entire day" says Dr. Grey. In conclusion, playing video games with moderation will promote a healthy attitude and a productive mind. †

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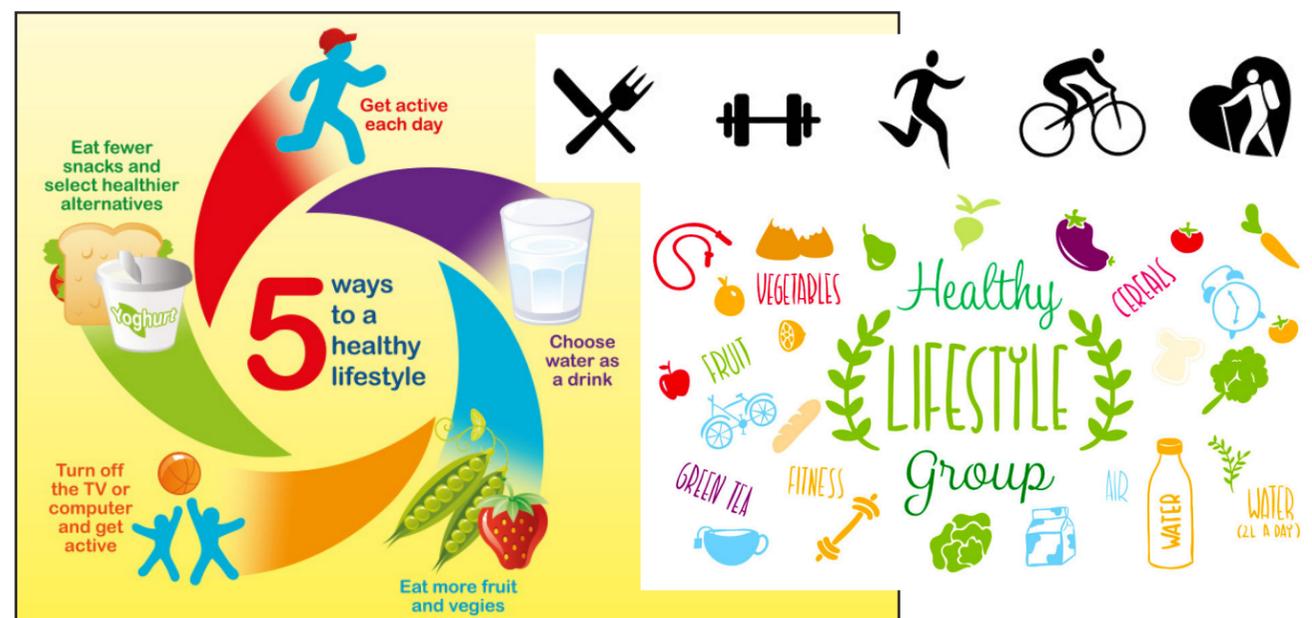
Tips for a Healthy Lifestyle

by Aymen Saaedi

Tired of feeling self-conscious around people? Tired of always feeling like crap? If so, here are some tips for a healthy lifestyle that could help you become the best version of yourself. Many people think that in order for you to become healthy, you have to be on those crazy diets eating nothing but salads, detox teas, and hitting the treadmill for hours, which turn people off almost immediately after they start. It's really much simpler, satisfying and more effective than that.

One of the most important components to a healthy lifestyle is diet. A balanced diet is where you get all the nutrients your body needs for it to function efficiently. A healthy, balanced diet should contain fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and proteins. When thinking about a diet, you need to keep in mind your calorie intake. Calories are basically the energy the select food source contains; our body uses calories for everything like walking, breathing, thinking, and uses up more calories for more demanding tasks like exercise. The number of calories you should intake daily differs according to your height, weight and age. In order to fully understand your body needs, a simple Google search could provide you the information you need to get you going on your journey.

Why is calculating your caloric intake important? The next component for a healthy lifestyle



is exercise. Exercise is one of the reasons it's important to calculate your intake because burning more calories than you consume is the main reason for fat loss, which is known as caloric deficit.

When you think about it, burning 3,000 calories might seem like a hard thing to do in one day, but in reality, it's not. As stated before, we burn calories doing anything, so as the day goes on, things like cleaning, chores, showers, etc. burn some calories, which helps, but the most impactful way to burn a good number of calories is weightlifting, and High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT). Weightlifting and HIIT workouts are a sure way for your body to break down calories, but in order to really gain from those workouts, they need to be connected to a healthy diet followed by caloric intake awareness.

The last component is very essential in order to be truly healthy and it's the most important one—taking care of yourself, knowing when you are tired, thirsty, sleepy, and hungry. Sleep is a very important part of good health; the better the sleep, the more energized you are for the rest of the day. Drinking water also contributes for better health in the long run. Water consumption also varies according to your body. Drinking water helps increase white blood cells, which are precious cells your body uses fight infections and diseases. The more white blood cells, the less chance you are going to be sick.

A better, and healthier lifestyle starts with you. The more you want to take care of your body, the more your body takes care of you. Exercise releases dopamine, which is the make you feel good

chemical, which means you are happy after a workout. A diet can bring positive changes to your body and long-term benefits. Sleep, and drinking water can help you become a better person, and helps make you feel great, confident, and proud of yourself.

Nothing comes easy-- if you are truly passionate about making a change in your body, commitment is key. Positive changes in your body require time, but if you truly are committed, they will come. †

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HEALING CONSCIOUSNESS: PSYCHEDELICS AS MEDICINE

by Matthew Medina

When you read “psychedelics” what comes to mind? Is it acid and The Beatles? Perhaps Neil Patrick Harris on shrooms? Whatever the association, chances are it involves wild, brilliantly colorful trips full of dragons and unicorns. But psychedelics’ use-value extends beyond music composition or blockbuster comedies. These compounds show promise as breakthrough medicines.

After the Controlled Substances Act in 1970, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) scheduled Lysergic acid diethylamide-25, or LSD (acid, Lucy) as a Schedule I substance, meaning the government considered it a dangerous drug with no medical applications.

We have all heard the stories of some hippie dropping too much acid and degenerating into a raving lunatic. However, are acid and other psychedelics really as destructive as D.A.R.E. would have us believe? Many experts argue that they are mostly safe and are potentially breakthrough medicines.

Psychonauts (or crackpots depending on who you ask) have preached the benefits of psy-

chedelics as tools for expanding consciousness. The compounds’ abilities help people conquer fear, break down psychological barriers, or act as a gateway to other dimensions. More traditional researchers have joined the chorus of psychonauts.

For example, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill Wilson, saw LSD as a potential cure for alcoholism. Under the recommendation of renowned author and LSD advocate, Aldous Huxley, Wilson guided his patients’ acid trips. Wilson genuinely believed LSD was the antidote to alcoholism. Though hyperbolic, there is some truth to this claim. LSD, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), N, N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), and Methylendioxyamphetamine (MDMA, Molly) have shown validity as psychiatric medicines.

In the case of mushrooms, their efficacy was demonstrated in a pair of studies at New York University (NYU) and Johns Hopkins University (JHU). In these two studies, terminally ill participants were given doses of psilocybin to alleviate end-of-life depression. The results were largely positive. Most of

the participants reported feeling substantially better with a measurable improvement in mood. In the case of the JHU study, 80 percent of the participants felt improvements in their mood for up to six months after the study. Both studies were published in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology* in December of 2016.

In an earlier study, in 2014, JHU treated fifteen cigarette smokers with doses of psilocybin. The results were impressive; 80 percent of the participants did not smoke in the first six months after taking the mushrooms. After a year, this number dropped to 67 percent, still far greater than conventional treatments at around 10 percent, and vaping at 18 percent. And unlike other treatments, psilocybin has immediate effects. Rather than acting as a replacement, the psilocybin kills the craving. Other compounds, like DMT, which is often ingested in a brew called Ayahuasca, have also demonstrated this ability to kill cravings. In fact, this seems to be something intrinsic with psychedelic experiences.

We are now finding results today mirroring those from the 1950s when researchers found similarly impressive success rates

with LSD and psilocybin. In the 50s and 60s, a researcher could legally obtain free LSD in the mail. Yes, you read that correctly.

A Swiss company formerly known as Sandoz (now Novartis) owned the patent for LSD-25. Until 1965, when the government banned LSD, Sandoz would send stacks of sheets to researchers. To give the reader some perspective on how many doses a sheet contains, know that a single dose can fit on a blot of paper no more than an inch long. Altogether, an individual researcher was given hundreds or even thousands of “hits” of acid for free. The times sure have changed.

Since 2004, MDMA has been used to help veterans overcome PTSD. A study, conducted by Dr. Mithoefer, found the veterans’ conditions not only improved, but they learned to confront and conquer their fears. This is a promising discovery given the ineffectiveness of current PTSD treatment. Similar, though admittedly not scientifically controlled, results have been linked to DMT use. The native peoples of South and Central America have used this powerful compound for thou-

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Why Sleep?

by Aymen Saedi

Early mornings... cold weather... running on 5 hours of sleep sounds like a terrible start to the day, but to students it’s a regular day. Sleep shapes up the way your day is going to go. Someone who has had 8 hours of sleep is going to be more attentive than a person running on 5 hours of sleep who is more likely to look and feel like a zombie.

What is sleep? Sleep is the altered state of consciousness in which we spend about one third of our lives. Sleep plays an important part in rejuvenating the body and ensuring it functions efficiently. Sleep is a natural state of rest distinguished by a decrease in voluntary body movement and reduction in awareness of surrounding. Although sleep is shared in common by a lot of living organisms, nobody knows why we sleep.

Sure, sleep brings about positive and healthy benefits to our bodies, but there is no apparent reason for sleep like there is for hunger or thirst. When we go



without sleep for a long period, we start to crave sleep just as much as we would if deprived of food and water.

Sleep helps improve important restorative function, for example, research shows that getting enough hours of sleep boosts the immune response, strengthening our chances of not getting diseases. Sleep also cleanses the body from chemicals released during the day; one of those chemicals is adenosine. Adenosine is a naturally formed chemical that is known as a neurotransmitter which affects the behavior of sleep.

Adenosine includes chemicals that contribute to wakefulness, in which these chemicals are built up and stored the longer a person stays awake, which contributes to the level of sleepiness a person feels. When a person sleeps, the level of adenosine is decreased every hour making the chemical begin the next cycle when the person wakes up.

Sleep provides an increase in cognitive function, which is the ability to think and process thoughts. Cognitive refers to memory, comprehension, learning, or speech. For Instance, when

a problem emerges, and people are given time to sleep before solving it, they are more likely to produce a better solution than they would have if they were not given time to sleep. This implies that getting an adequate amount of sleep is connected to better decision making, creativity, and problem solving. Sleep is also an important contributor to the development of long-term memory.

Every age group needs a different number of hours to sleep to be able to function as efficiently and effectively as possible. Between one-third and one-half of all adolescents almost always fail to get the proper amount of sleep. Starting with newborns, they need from 14 to 17 hours of sleep in order to develop in the best way possible. Infants who are anywhere from 4 months to 11 months need about 12 to 15 hours of sleep, while toddlers who range from 1 to 2 years of age need 11 to 14 hours of sleep. Preschoolers who attend school,

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by Sophie Markham

“Being young and having a baby doesn’t stop anything unless you let it,” says 17-year-old Katelyn Vazquez when discussing her plans into adulthood while having to raise a child so young.

I wanted to get the point of view of a young woman juggling out the tasks of balancing out high school, mental health and her hopes for the future of raising a child at such a young age. Across America the teen pregnancy dropout rate is about 90%. Teen pregnancies are declining every year and the dropout rate is reducing along with that. Katelyn, on the other hand, does not see dropping out as an option as she plans on advancing to her last year of high school in the fall.

Along with my first maternity shoot of Katelyn, I asked a couple of questions regarding her first initial reaction to her pregnancy.

Katelyn says, “I was super nervous for the simple fact that I am so young and still in school. Having to tell my parents as well. I look at having a baby as a reason. Everything happens for a reason.”

“It has been tough, especially now since I’m nearing my due date. My back always hurts and



I’m always tired. I’m hoping my senior year will go as smoothly as it can with the SATs. Although I’m focusing on my daughter during my maternity leave, I’m still picking up work to stay on track and focus on graduating on time. Prom is something that I do look forward to celebrating as my high school career comes to an end.

As a young mother there’s nothing more that I want then for my daughter to watch me across the stage and receive my diploma.”

Regarding her pregnancy, Katelyn says “Throughout the last 9 months, it’s been nothing but enthusiasm and nervousness. At any minute I can have a contraction and then I’m giving birth! Pregnancy is sort of a scary thing because so many situations can happen, but I thank god everyday that everything has been great.

My baby is healthy and growing perfectly. My views on life have

changed tremendously. Nothing is about me anymore. Everything is about her. I no longer put myself first and I’ve matured. This is something big happening and changes must be made whether I’m willing to do it or not. My mindset has transformed and I’m glad it has.

She adds, “My hopes are to raise a smart and beautiful young lady. There’s nothing more that I want to do than raise her to be respectful, kind and happy. I think of so many activities and things we plan to do in the future, and it gets me so excited! Everything I didn’t get the chance of doing with my own mother growing up I can do with her. I hope she knows very well that everything I do for her I will be doing with all the strength I have in me.”

As for her own growth and development, Katelyn says, “I plan to nurture as an adult while

raising my baby just like any other young mother would. Going to college and achieving all the goals I had set before I even found out I was going to have a child are going to happen. Becoming a correctional officer will always be a dream of mine, and now I feel like having my daughter will only push me harder to reaching my aspirations. Being young and having a baby isn’t an excuse to hold anyone back on their dreams unless you allow it to.

Our maternity shoot was my first encounter with Katelyn. Although I had no idea what her personality was like I realized how mature she is for her age. Despite her pregnancy and still being stuck in the angsty halls of high school, Katelyn’s intelligence is beyond most 17-year old’s I’ve met. Her maturity beats out a lot of stereotypes on teen moms. Nothing stops a young mother from attaining her dreams in the face of having to raise a child. Just like Katelyn said, everything happens for a reason. †

Sources: <https://www.xyzjyotishcenter.com/everything-happens-for-a-reason/>

<<<Sleep, cont'd from page 4

age 3 to 5 years old, need about 10 to 13 hours in order for them to develop their and improve cognitive functioning, while school age children need about 9 to 11 hours of sleep. Teenagers who need about 8 to 10 hours of sleep are at the age where they have busier days and more information and data to process than the younger age groups. Teenagers tend to get less sleep than they need, which results in a large number sleeping through their classes and paying less attention to what they learn.

Adults, anywhere from 18 years old to over 65 need to get about 7 to 9 hours of regular sleep cycles, which 80 percent of all adults in the U.S. do not get. Despite what many say, people do not get used to not getting enough sleep. Not getting enough sleep will begin to take effect on a person within weeks. The more someone loses sleep the more susceptible to shorter attention spans, and difficulty remembering. As time moves on, sleep deprivation will result in more effects, which include slow reaction times, unpredictable behavior

and impaired logical reasoning. Sleep deficiencies also linked with wider issues such as car crashes, public altercations and even work-related mistakes.

Sleep deprivation has been shown to generate diseases such as heart attacks, asthma, strokes, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Lack of sleep is also a contributor to depression among adults. One way to decrease sleep deprivation is to take short naps during the day to reduce irritability, stress, and improve efficiency. Not getting enough sleep can increase the risk of having more sick days because of the decrease in the strength of the immune system caused by the lack of sleep. Sleep deprivation can also increase the chances of a person becoming diabetic because of the release of insulin in the body. Sleep is great to maintaining the balance in your body that helps heal and maintain the heart vessels, and also helps control and reduce inflammation in the body.

In order for a person to get as much sleep as necessary, they need to follow routines that help

them during their week to get the amount of sleep recommended for their age.

There is another way to ensure a person gets their needed amount of rest, like paying back the sleep debt owed. Sleep debt is the amount of sleep that is missing from your day accrued for longer period of time. You can pay back the sleep debt by either sleeping longer at night or getting some extra daytime nap sessions. Sleep is an excellent way to prevent health issues; anything that is caused by sleep deprivation, fortunately can be reversed by getting enough sleep.

Good sleeping habits increase the probability of a person getting enough sleep, and also becoming efficient with their time throughout the day. It is great to have a routine and reminders of when you need to sleep. First off, go to sleep when you are tired or when obvious signals arise, such as yawning or the inability to concentrate further. Follow a sleep schedule that fits your day and works for you, like setting reminders at a specific time to go

to sleep and wake up at a time that you set that ensures you get the proper amount of sleep.

Exercise is a great way to improve your sleep patterns; regular exercise usually gets a person to have a better chance to sleep better, though more intense exercise sessions before sleep can leave a person to stay up longer and take them more time to fall asleep. Sleep is an important factor in the development of kids, and in maintaining the health of people. Nobody knows why we sleep, but sleeping the amount of time needed to be rejuvenated, healthy, and energetic can bring about great health benefits for the body. †

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Facilitating Success: How STCC Can Better Serve Its High-Achieving Students

by Matthew Medina

Community colleges serve a vital role in higher education. A community college is a remarkably flexible institution, catering to myriad needs of their diverse student bodies. They may be an older student's second chance at getting a degree; they may be the only affordable option for students with dependents or financial hardship; they also serve as a stepping stone for those who want to continue their education.

Due to the many varying needs of their students, community colleges are faced with a large set of roles all while operating on a tight budget. The task of educating students from all walks of life while keeping the tuition as inexpensive as possible, puts community colleges in a tough spot. Thankfully, through advocacy efforts from organizations like the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, community colleges and similar two-year institutions are getting more attention.

At STCC, we are especially good at sending our students to great public four-year institutions like UMass Amherst. But we offer no specialized support program for our high-achieving students in acquiring a bigger prize: admittance to selective four-year colleges. With specialized guidance, these students have a real shot at admittance to top colleges like



Retired Springfield Technical Community College President Ira Rubenzahl cuts the ribbon to dedicate the new student center named for him as Gov. Charlie Baker and others look on.

Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, and Smith College.

To STCC's credit, the issue is known. Recently, STCC linked an article in *The Atlantic*, written by Adam Harris, that cites data showing that community college students do as well or better than those who attend selective colleges as freshmen or transfers from four-year colleges. While many may doubt that such students exist in any large capacity, according to data from a study published by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, thousands of these students attend colleges where they are "under-matched," that is, their performance

is greater than the average student at that college. In this way, talented students settle for less challenging schools, which leads to a higher likelihood of them leaving school. Students who feel sufficiently challenged *more often stay enrolled and complete their degree*.

It's far too common that misconceptions about affordability, lack of familiarity with the Common Application system, and insufficient transferrable credits gatekeep students who would be accepted to top colleges.

Currently, I'm assisting three students at STCC with the application process. One is a brilliant woman who is now a semi-finalist for the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, which each year awards about 45 two-year college students with up to \$40,000 for the next three years of their undergraduate education.

Another student, who's a member of the STCC Student Government Association, is applying to Brown University this Spring. This particular student nearly missed out on applying because he had issues navigating the college admission process. Had I not been there to help him, it is likely he would have missed out on the opportunity.

A third student is applying as an Ada Comstock scholar and a Francis Perkins scholar at Smith College and Mount Holyoke College, respectively. Confusion about the process was a roadblock, but with some guidance, she's now well on her way to applying with a good shot at getting into one, if not both, of these colleges.

Students from low-income backgrounds and first-generation

students struggle, especially from a lack of knowledge. Programs like Pathways are an answer to this deficit in knowledge of the system. It is time STCC created its own Pathways to cater to our high-achieving students.

STCC made a crucial first step by negotiating an agreement between the engineering department and Northeastern University. High-achieving mechanical engineering students at STCC can now earn a degree from Northeastern. But STCC cannot afford to stop there. We must ensure that students with interests in other academic fields have the support they need to realize their goals.

Although STCC is a technical college, we attract more than just STEM students. We are a vehicle for our community.

I believe we ought to give our students the most support we can offer. As a former STCC student now attending a top 20 college, I know first-hand how important specialized guidance is. Had it not been for my various mentors in the community, I would not now be a student at Williams College.

But I'm far from alone. With a school that is ripe with hidden talent, we have an opportunity—and an obligation—to make a real difference in the lives of some of our most talented students. †

Sources: "Community-College Students Succeed at Elite Schools—When They're Admitted," by Adam Harris, published in *The Atlantic* on 15 January, 2019. "Persistence: The Success of Students Who Transfer from Community Colleges to Selective Four-Year Institutions," by Jennifer Glenn, Ph.D., published by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, January 2019.

Photo: <https://www.wamc.org/post/gov-baker-helps-dedicate-new-student-center-stcc>



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Farm Animals Stage Walk-Out After Hampshire College Decides Against Matriculating Freshman

Satire by Matthew Medina

Farm animals at Hampshire College recently staged a walk-out. The animals took issue with the Board's decision on February 1st to halt any freshman class enrollments for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 that were not previously due to matriculate. The animals' protest was inspired by Hampshire students' sit-in protest reacting to the school's decision.

Hampshire College, a small liberal arts institution known for its politically active student body, has run into funding issues. Unable to secure funding, the college is unsure it could afford to teach a full Freshman class through to graduation.

The animals led by Betsy, a cow who works at Hampshire College's barn, are protesting the decision by walking out of work. Hampshire is known for its leading agriculture and animal hospitality programs, and the animals' missing presence will send shock waves across campus.

Betsy, in an interview with the *Boston Globe*, said "Moo," citing administration's tendency to treat them as livestock rather than treat them as equals.

As the animal herd left the campus, they clucked, moored, and neighed in unison to the cheering of many students who were watching from a field near the barn house.

Not all students were so supportive. Janice Ignacio expressed worry over the protest. "I have a project that requires me to care for some of the chickens that walked out this morning. This project is necessary for me to graduate, and with this being my last semester, it's making me really nervous."

Administration met recently to try to quell the situation. A spokeswoman for Hampshire stated, "If necessary, we may need to purchase new livestock. In unsure, financially difficult times that would certainly set us back."

At this news, Betsy scoffed and continued grazing among other protesting ungulates at nearby field. †

Sources: "Hampshire College won't admit full freshman class," by Laura Krantz, published by *The Boston Globe* on 2 February 2019.

"Hampshire Board Decision on Admitting a Fall 2019 Class," published by *Hampshire College* on 1 February, 2019.

Former President Of Purdue Pharma Becomes Addicted To Opioids While Trying To Prove A Point

Satire by Matthew Medina

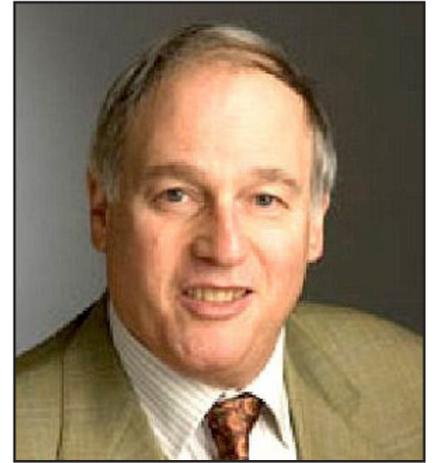
Richard Sackler, former President and Chairperson of Purdue Pharma, became addicted to OxyContin while trying to prove that if used properly, his family's trademark product is not addictive. Sackler allegedly urged his physician to prescribe him OxyContin after he injured himself while playing tennis at a private country club. Earlier today, Sackler checked into a luxury drug rehabilitation center in Austin.

In a now deleted tweet, Sackler bragged that, "After four days of Oxy treatment, I've got no hankering for more." He stopped posting on his social media accounts on January 21st., exactly one week after starting on the medication.

Presently, 36 states are suing Purdue Pharma. The states filing the suit blame Purdue for spreading misinformation about the addictive potential of OxyContin, and for pushing physicians to prescribe the opioid to patients.

A spokesperson for Purdue Pharma responded:

"All this self-imposed challenge proves is that Mr. Richard Sackler, while once known for his



shrewd business sense and good judgment, ultimately lost his edge after retiring from Purdue Pharma. We at Purdue ensure that all of our products are safe for patients when properly used. While this incident is unfortunate, the blame is Mr. Sackler's alone for pushing his doctor to recklessly prescribe medicine he didn't need."

In an email made public, Purdue executives blamed patients for their addiction to OxyContin. Purdue maintains that they have followed proper FDA guidelines and claims that the plaintiffs are unduly targeting the company. †

Source: <https://newspunch.com/big-pharma-opioid-drug-addicts/>
Photo: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6144391/The-former-president-Purdue-Pharma-granted-new-patent-drug-fight-opioid-abuse>

Opening of The Ira H. Rubenzahl Learning Commons • Building 19



December 11, 2018

Photos by Tech Times Staff.

Saccharine Love

by Matthew Medina

I love cake. I love cake more than I love my parents; I even love cake more than I love myself. I don't love just any cake, though. No! I love a very particular cake. A beautiful, soft, moist, vanilla sponge cake from La Florentina in the South End.

Of course, dear reader, you may not understand my love. No one seems to. No one except Cake and I, of course. But this love is requited and pure. Cake is alive. Cake is life. Cake whispers to me at night, intoxicating me with the promise of a saccharine kiss. The doctors tell me I'm delusional and will die prematurely as a result of my love for Cake. But I know they're wrong. For our love is true, and Cake tells me so. Cake tells me that all will be all right so long as I stay loyal. And I trust cake more than anything in this world.

I walk to the refrigerator to visit Cake. I open the door, the glossy cardboard box glistening under the light. The glare makes me squint. I carefully lift the cardboard box and set it on the island in the kitchen. Gently, like a museum curator handling an ancient artifact, I lift its cover and take in the sight. There's Cake. The rosettes are perfect. Along Cake's circumference are the perfectly formed mint-green rosettes. A neon-blue sugary paste spells out the words, "I love you, Matt." Crumbs cover Cake's lower layer like a skirt does a young woman. Cake completes my life.

But love is complicated, and love hurts. I knew this day would come, but I'd pushed it into the back of my mind until now. I go to the living room and cry. I cry alone for a long while. I can't bear the thought of Cake seeing me like

this. Some things are just better left to oneself, and this grief is one of those things.

After I calm down, I come back to the kitchen and open the drawer. Inside is a pristine cake knife I bought for the occasion. Some would tell me I'm sick. No one understands true love. But true love is when individuals occupy the same space. I want Cake to be a part of me, not metaphorically, not even spiritually. No, I want to blur the lines of Cake's existence; I want Cake's very being to manifest in my body. And so, I must cut Cake — not for myself, but for *us*.

I try and fail to fight back tears as I rest the tip of the knife on Cake's midpoint. I hear Cake screaming as I slice down the middle. At first the sound is unbearable, but my passion overtakes me, and grief turns to excitement.

I repeat this process, starting from the midpoint and cutting across the radius at different angles to make equilateral triangles out of Cake. The excitement fades into something numb and robotic. What started as an act of passion then devolved into something bereft of feeling. This thought scared me, and so when I finished the job, I took a minute to gather my thoughts.

I walk to my living room and sit on the couch. The weight of my actions set in and I begin to weep. I weep pathetically, like a child, for a long time. I was partly relieved to feel such grief, however. While cutting Cake, I feared my humanity may have left me; I feared that my love may have left me. But no, my love for Cake remained just as pure and passionate.

I love you, Cake, and this is why I do this. ††

<<<Healing, cont'd from page 4

sands of years as a cure for mental ailments and addictions. Today DMT is being used for much the same purpose underground in the U.S. and Canada, and at treatment centers in Mexico where Ayahuasca is legal.

Remarkably, these compounds have no known propensity for addiction nor is there evidence of an overdose limit. By the very mechanism of their healing, psychedelics stave off addiction. Unlike methadone or nicotine patches, psychedelic compounds do not fight addiction by satiating withdrawal symptoms. Rather than weaning off a substance, psychedelics cause new and direct neural connections. The parts of the brain responsible for memory and processing emotions communicate directly with the frontal lobe, or the rational part of the brain. Tom Shroder, writing for *The Washington Post*, sums it up well:

Passie theorizes that as the amygdala lets down its guard under the drug's quieting influence, the traumatic memories can reemerge from the hippocampus to be sent up for the higher processing the brain didn't do in the immediacy of the trauma. The reprocessing is assisted by the tide of hormones MDMA causes to be released.

Psychiatrist Abram Hoffer came to a similar conclusion in the 1950s with regard to LSD and alcoholics:

As a general rule those who have not had the transcendental experience are not changed; they continue to drink. However, the

large proportion of those who have had it are changed.

It is this motivation, likely inspired by hundreds of novel neurological connections, that inspires such powerful change.

But, inevitably, I must rain on the parade, if only for a bit. While the stories of "acid flashbacks" and the oft-reported psychedelic-induced psychosis are largely overstated, such psychotic episodes can result from these compounds.

Psychiatrists and researchers say that those with psychotic disorders, or a family history of such, should not use psychedelics. The effects may trigger the onset of latent psychotic disorders like Schizophrenia. Research participants are thoroughly screened before they are approved for these trials. Likewise, I urge everyone to use the same caution. While I support the medical use of these compounds, recreational use ought to be approached with the utmost caution. Not only can labs properly screen people, they also have access to pure compounds. Substances bought from the street often contain adulterants that can seriously harm you.

While this subject is too complicated to cover in this piece, I strongly urge that all readers approach these substances cautiously. Improper use can result in serious psychological distress or psychosis.

So the research looks promising, but if psychedelics are so safe then why ban them to begin with? Anyone could reasonably assume such strict scheduling must reflect the drug's danger. After all, it

is categorized Schedule 1, the same class as heroin. But there is a caveat: cannabis is also listed as a Schedule 1 substance along with heroin, MDMA, psilocybin, and LSD. The scheduling of psychedelics and cannabis will need to be the subject for another article, but the point stands the DEA was imprecise with its scheduling efforts, to put it lightly.

Like marijuana, LSD was demonized. LSD's association with counterculture movements such as the Civil Rights movement, anti-war protests, and the sexual liberation movement put it in the government's crosshairs. It was a clash between a post-WWII conservatism against new-age individualism. However, a pedagogue of the psychedelic counterculture damaged LSD's reputation.

The most famous LSD advocate, Timothy Leary, did great harm to the compound's reputation. Leary, a former Harvard professor, was highly energetic and boisterous. Through his reckless words and actions, he helped create a moral panic against LSD use. His most famous blunder is his Chapel experiment, where he dosed multiple unsuspecting students with high doses of LSD without a controlled setting. You can imagine how this experiment devolved into chaos. Terrified, tripping students ran outside of the church and some had breakdowns. All in all, this experiment violated ethics standards and fed into the growing hysteria surrounding LSD.

This hysteria pooled over to other consciousness altering com-

pounds like psilocybin and DMT. However, the latter two compounds and MDMA carry far less stigma than LSD, which makes funding studies easier.

I believe we are living in an age of a consciousness revolution. Like with marijuana, other consciousness altering, empathy inducing compounds are being recognized as medicines. MDMA and psilocybin are awaiting their third-phase of FDA trials, the last step before the final approval process.

We are seeing the vestiges of a moral panic crumble. Let us hope this process keeps moving forward, and that we may stay open to novel, and sometimes unconventional, treatments. If you wish to learn more about the subject, I suggest you read Michael Pollan's *How to Change your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*.

In the words of the (in)famous Timothy Leary, "Turn on, tune in, drop out." ††

Sources: "Active ingredient in Ecstasy May Help Veterans with PTSD, Study Finds," by Susan Scutti, published in CNN on 3 May 2018. "Can Psychedelic Trips Cure PTSD and Other Maladies," by Tom Shroder, published in *The Washington Post* on 17 November 2014. "FDA Puts 'Magic Mushroom' Ingredient on Fast Track for Depression Treatment," by Bob Curley, published in *Healthline* on 7 November 2018. "Michael Pollan on Testing Psychedelics as a Treatment for Depression" by David Morgan, published in *CBS This Morning* on 14 May 2018. "My Adventures with the Trip Doctors," by Michael Pollan, published in *The New York Times* on 15 May 2018. "Study Found Vaping Beat Traditional Smoking-Cessation Options," by Richard Harris, published on NPR on 30 January 2019. "Why Psychedelics could be the New Class of Antidepressant," by Jack Dutton, published in *The Independent* on 8 July 2018. Photo: <https://inchemistry.acs.org/content/inchemistry/en/atomic-news/hallucinogenic-drugs.html>