

# A lazy highschooler

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I am a highschooler. My name is Emily, and I go to school for six hours and fifty minutes every day. And when I get home, I have homework to do. Hours of it, from most every teacher.

Sleep's overrated anyway. Just kidding! Or should I say jk? Which would you expect from a high school teenager, too lazy to type the whole words? Or, maybe, I'm too tired from the lack of sleep and constant stress. From what? School. The education system, as a whole, is too hard on teenagers, too uncaring and unbending. Pushing and pushing and pushing us, the students, to go and go and go, clearing themselves of any guilt when we try to tell them to slow down by saying we are just complaining.

The expectations in high schools have skyrocketed from that of middle school, especially with the copious amounts of homework, as if to try and separate the class into two groups: " who can still keep up" and " who isn't trying hard enough" while shoving more and more homework down our throats. The homework load is one of the worst issues in the system. While it takes a rather small amount to be effective in practicing the information learned that day, often, more than what is necessary is given. I feel the effects of this overestimation daily; even thinking about the amount of homework I have is daunting. The main reason I have, on a normal basis, such an urge to procrastinate is because there is simply so much that it feels almost hopeless to try. I am so stressed out it suddenly becomes this insurmountable task, magnified by the weight dragging on my eyelids.

The homework piles up, science and math and English and Spanish, in a precarious pile of binders and notebooks that patiently sit, waiting as I look

at them in despair as tears well in eyes that wish for nothing more than to close. I was told about an hour of homework for every honors class I took, but I couldn't not take them. Then I'd be lazy, not living up to my "full potential." So, of course, I took the classes, for teachers I didn't know yet would be disappointed in me if I didn't. I bear the homework, many times staying up until midnight or one in the morning on weekends to do my English, Spanish, and math.

It's not uncommon to see me in the late hours of the night taking shots of the strongest coffee I can make and chasing it with water, trying to wash the bitter taste out of my mouth as I turn, once more, to the bright computer screen on the table in front of me. Just as I try to handle the homework, so do all of my friends. One stays about around midnight, every night, to finish her homework. Another stays up to anywhere from eight to eleven only to wake up at 5:15 am to continue it. And I see both in the gym before school starts, daily, trying to finish what they couldn't last night, having finally given in to the primal urge to sleep despite the work that still remained.

They get no congratulations for their effort, no "good job," beyond a TURNED IN grade and a bookbag ready to acquire more homework. Both friends take almost the same classes that I do, honors because we could, and, therefore, should. Many friends of mine face the same homework problems, along with the rest of my class. We are running on little sleep and even less hope; this homework load will likely continue for the next, at least, seven years with the rest of high school and four years of college. And my friends and I are not alone.

One study found, in an article from the American Psychology Association, over 30% of participating teens felt overwhelmed and 30% were depressed or at least sad from all the stress put on them. Not only that, the overall feeling of stress that they gave was almost 20% above the level deemed healthy and topped the adults' average by a significant margin (" American Psychological Association Survey Shows Teen Stress Rivals That of Adults"). America's teens, who attend high school to prepare for the real world and adult life, are feeling more stressed than the actively working adults. Much of this stress can be traced back, like a web of string, to homework. One study discovered that over half of the sample teens said that the homework was the largest stress factor in their lives (Enayati, Amanda).

This information, though not surprising to high school students, seems to run contrary to adults' strongly-held belief of blaming stress on social media or technology. And this stress has an enormous impact on students lives, much beyond just losing sleep. It, among other things, raises the probability of suicide and self-harm. Suicide is the second most common cause of death for children and teens from 12-18 (" Youth Suicide Statistics"). About every 100 minutes, a teenager successfully commits suicide; a large number even excluding those that failed in that span of less than two hours (" Why Today's Teens Are More Depressed Than Ever.").

The statistics for self-harm is equally alarming; 1/3 to 1/2 of adolescents in America have done some kind of self-harm like cutting or burning, and the numbers are rising (" Cutting Statistics and Self-Injury Treatment."). While I cannot say anything for my friends or me, based on these statistics, it is almost certain that at least some of the kids in this school self-harm or have

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attempted suicide. This needs to end. Some of the stress must be removed for the health and lives of teenagers and the simplest, clearest, and most obvious solutions to this is reduce the homework.

We, the teenage students of the self-proclaimed great country of the United States of America are trained like dogs to do as a teacher says. We are struggling, trying and trying to meet these high expectations set out for us by the constant competition we face and are instructed to make between ourselves, and we, as the next generation, will drag down the country without the help we need and deserve. Listen to our voices when we say that this is too much, that we need help. Give us smaller rounds of effective homework, not hours of busy work that aren't worth the time required to do them. Stop telling us that we are lazy and look at the stress we are put under by the constant battering of work. Stop telling us we aren't working hard enough, then being surprised by the rising suicide and self-harm rates.

We are working as hard as we can, but we ask: How much working is enough? Works Cited " American Psychological Association Survey Shows Teen Stress Rivals That of Adults." American Psychological Association, American Psychological Association, 11 Feb. 2014. " Cutting Statistics and Self-Injury Treatment." Teen Help, Teen Help. com, 16 Mar.

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