

# Trials and tribulations of college admissions

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Junior year has always been rumored to be the hardest year of school and most stressful year of your life. That's an understatement. The ubiquity of stress in the lives of sixteen and seventeen year olds has become a thoroughly outrageous constant. Coming from an upper-middle class area where all my friends are all pressured to get into the top colleges and maintain a 4.0 GPA, it manages to rub off on me, despite having fairly relaxed parents about my performance in school.

According to Nationwide's Children, teenagers need an average of 9 to 9.5 hours of sleep each night for maximum performance and ability. When reading this, I was shocked yet unsurprised of the magnitude of that range - I can't even remember the last time I've shut my eyes for longer than eight hours uninterrupted. Throughout this year, my moves have become sluggish, plagued by a blanket of an eternal fatigue that refuses to rise. But why is it so difficult to accumulate a reasonable amount of sleep per night? There's just simply too much to do in such a minute amount of time.

Every time I feel like it's time to finally go to bed, my chaotic brain decides to remind me about that essay due on Thursday or that budget I have to complete for the event I'm running next week. Most would argue that the "smart" thing would be to cut my losses and value my health over grade, but that just means they aren't a true friend of mine. Starting my freshman year, every action of mine has been to maximize my potential of being accepted into the top colleges, beating out all of my classmates for those few select spots. The prospect of not staying up until 2:00 AM one night to study for an AP Chem exam is a frightening thought for me, telling myself that getting that "A" is more important than the extreme toll that it takes on my body to

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achieve this. It may sound extremely hypocritical that I can sit here and write about all of the sleep that I sacrifice for my “ future”, but that’s what these societal standards have created within me. I know that there is a problem with the way that I treat myself.

The stigma that admission into the top college means truly making it in life has spread to me like the Black Plague in Medieval Europe, infecting me with the toxic obsession with formulating the perfect future for myself. It’s one of those things where the feeling of being not good enough clouds my judgement and eliminates any sense of logic within myself. For such smart people who seek admittance into the most prestigious universities, we have very little self awareness and reasoning. The only planning is long-term, with our eyes on the prize. Starting freshman year, I had about six plans on how I wanted high school to go for me, and literally none of them turned out how I foresaw. My academic four year plan has metamorphosed into a more major-based schedule instead of one driven by sole quantity of AP and honors classes.

I lost regional vice president of a club called BBYO that I’m involved in outside of school, which messed everything up on that front. Both of these things devastated me, thinking that they inhibited my chances of being accepted into the prestigious colleges that I was actively pursuing. It’s become abundantly clear to myself that every single action of mine has been driven by a perfect yet impossible future that will never come to fruition. The toll it has taken on me, from a deterioration in my health, to losing friends to my responsibilities, to stressing out about everything, has become too great for me to ignore. I wish it had become more obvious earlier in my high school

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career, but I'm glad that I'm not going to conform to what everybody else wants me to be. My top school is now my most economically viable option, despite not having the distinguished reputation of the other schools that appealed to me. High school society has turned into a competitive world where I can't do what I want anymore, and instead, I have to do what I "need" for my future. There isn't much we can do to change the nature of this world, but we need to be understanding of each other and realize that happiness and our own well-being shouldn't be sacrificed for some utopian future that will never come true.