

THE MIGHTY ALL-NIGHTER

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 THE BATTALION

The night before a big test. Twelve chapters to read. Sixty-four pages of notes to copy. Eight hundred ninety-three key concepts to review. Coffee maker just broke down. No fear — pull an all-nighter.

This method of studying has become a legend at colleges across the nation. Students must face the fact that sometime during their academic career they will not know as much about a subject as their professor expects them to know.

To remedy the situation some students may choose to pull the mighty all-nighter.

The monster called procrastination

Dr. Ron Darby, a chemical engineering professor, said students study all night for one of two reasons: preference or procrastination.

Darby said there is nothing wrong with studying at night if that is when a student does his best work.

"I'm a night person," Darby said. "I sometimes see the sun come up myself."

Darby said postponing work and then studying all night is a bad idea because these students "do a much poorer job" on assignments and tests.

Ryan Garcia, a senior environmental design major, said not all students study through the night because of laziness.

"[Our design projects] are just very time-consuming," Garcia said. "Our professor right now tells us to go home at 12, but he knows we're going to stay all night. We're going to do our best."

Garcia said he studies all night three or four times a week.

Dr. Michael Ash of the educational psychology department thinks perfectionism is another reason students pull all-nighters.

"Sometimes [students] are just obsessive," Ash said.

Andres Zornosa, a senior environmental design major, started staying up all night to study his freshman year. He spends his time "just basically working on the studio projects."

"You lose track of time — you might be pulling an all-nighter and not realize it," Zornosa said. "You can almost infinitely work on a project and never get just what you want. Once you get into architecture, you have to get used to it."

Zornosa said most students are simply trying to fulfill the basic requirements of a class.

"There's not enough time to be an overachiever," Zornosa said.

Debbie Moore, an environmental design graduate student, also started pulling all-nighters her freshman year "to get the work done." She now pulls one or two all-nighters during an average week and more when she is working on a big project.

"When a project's coming due, it's all-nighters until it's due," Moore said.

She also said her professors tell students not to study all night, but said she often has to in order to finish her work.

"We work on a project for two weeks, and we don't want to turn it in incomplete," Moore said. "Most of the time, the entire studio is up there, and so it's kind of fun."

Moore said she usually has a chance to recover some lost sleep after a project is turned in.

Ash said all-nighters are an example of mass practice (studying everything at one time) versus distributed practice (studying over a period of several days).

Ash said distributed practice usually yields better performance, but students know they can survive all-nighters, so they continue to do them.

Sophomore business major Don Turilli studies all night just before tests. Turilli said studying a lot in one night is a better use of his time than studying a little each day over a period of several days.

"I think I learn as much, but I don't retain as much," Turilli said.

Coy Kouba, an electrical engineering graduate student, said he likes to study at night when the campus is quieter. Kouba said all-nighters are practical because computers and other resources are more readily available.

"Sleep deprivation can be defined as: The longer you go without sleep, the more you need it — like thirst."

-Dr. Michael Ash
 educational psychology professor

"I study from about 11 p.m. on," Kouba said. "There is less disruption, less distraction. For most of my graduate work, I've been on the 'night shift,' so to speak."

Caffeine cause and effect
 Each student develops a different method to stay awake through the night to study. "I drink tons of coffee," Turilli said. "Maybe 12 cups."

Turilli takes his books, a pillow and a mug of coffee, and sits in the hall of his dorm while studying. He studies until he reaches the point where he cannot learn anymore.

Turilli said he takes a short nap before he resumes studying.

Garcia copes by sleeping for about four hours after his morning classes. He said he is able to study all night out of habit.

"You get kind of used to it," Garcia said. "It's like



you're in shape."

Kouba said the deadlines he has to meet motivate him to stay awake. Caffeine and frequent breaks to walk around or listen to music also help keep him going.

"I've adjusted to it now," Kouba said. "It's just a routine."

Zornosa studies by his 'two-hour theory.'

"When you can't make sense of stuff, sleep for two hours, and that will replenish you for another five hours," Zornosa said.

Moore stays awake by taking a nap before she starts studying whenever possible. She also drinks soft drinks to get a stimulant from the caffeine.

"I don't ever take NoDoz or Vivarin," Moore said. "They make me jittery."

Sharon Arnold, assistant director of nursing services at Beutel Health Center, said some students are only able to pull all-nighters by taking in large amounts of caffeine. These are the students who come to the health center with an increased pulse and heart rate.

"They're just wired," Arnold said. "It's not healthy."

Dr. Don Freeman, staff physician in charge of immediate care and preventive medicine at Beutel Health Center, said consuming large amounts of caffeine is unhealthy.

For some people, taking between 180 and 240 mg in a short time period could be an overdose.

Freeman said possible side effects of too much caffeine are headaches, stomach pains and confusion. Caffeine is a brain stimulant that also causes the constriction of blood vessels and an increase in stomach acid secretion.

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Unhealthy habit

Because a side effect of caffeine is an increase in stomach-acid secretion, Freeman said ingesting large amounts of caffeine on an empty stomach can "ultimately lead to an ulcer." If students choose to take caffeine, Freeman suggests eating first.

Freeman cautions students against relying on caffeine.

"Depending on caffeine to keep you awake is asking for trouble," Freeman said.

Lillian Clark, a pharmacist at Eckerd Drugs, said caffeine is mildly addictive.

"Your body gets used to it," Clark said. "You can have moderate withdrawal symptoms."

Mike Anthony, a pharmacist at Albertson's Food and Drug Store, said he generally doesn't like caffeine because it can be addictive, causing nervousness, headaches, lightheadedness and irregular beating of the heart.

"I'm not a big fan," Kouba said. "[Caffeine] is hard on the body's normal system."

Anthony said over-the-counter caffeine pills are good for a quick fix, but other than that, they are useless.

Anthony also said caffeine pills are not a big health risk, unless they are taken for a long time in excess amounts.

"For short-term use, they're fine," Anthony said.

Sleep deprivation can also be correlated with mental performance, Ash said.

"Sleep deprivation can be defined as: The longer you go without sleep, the more you need it — like thirst," Ash said.

Ash said students who stay up all night studying are more distracted during class and are less likely to actually attend class.

"These are both going to have the potential to hurt your performance," Ash said.

Freeman said the average person needs between six to eight hours of quality sleep a night.

"Some people can get by with less sleep," Freeman said. "But I still think all-nighters aren't a good idea."

Darby said study habits should be made on an individual basis.

"It depends on the individual and how they function best," Darby said.

Kouba said all-nighters are a good time to get grunt work out of the way.

"If I have to do repetitive, monotonous work, I do it at night," Kouba said.

He added that he tries to do his "thinking and cognitive work" earlier in the day.

Don Curtis, freshman services coordinator and academic adviser for the Office of Honors Programs and Academic Scholarships, believes that all-nighters are self-defeating.

"You're not retaining a lot of information," Curtis said. "Cramming and all-nighters are not the best way to assure decent grades."

Instead, Curtis recommends that students study in advance, review notes daily, and keep up with course work, instead of procrastinating.

the lows of caffeine highs

- Ingestion of large amounts of caffeine on an empty stomach can lead to an ulcer
- The average person needs between six to eight hours of sleep a night.
- Ingesting large amounts of caffeine can lead to increased pulse and heart rate.
- Caffeine is a brain stimulant that also causes the constriction of blood vessels and an increase in stomach acid secretion.