

Editorial

We Need to Talk About Mental HEALTH

Our stress levels are off the charts -- literally. The American Psychological Association's most recent survey, published in 2014, revealed the average teen's stress level was 5.8 on a 10 point scale. Juxtapose this to the average adult, who scored 5.1. More importantly, compare this to the stress level the APA deems healthy for teens, 3.9. This reported stress is indicative of the rigorous classes, extreme commitment to demanding extra-curriculars, high standardized testing scores and social anxiety that every student experiences to some degree.

"I feel so stressed.

This stress contributes to feel-

ings of anxiety. If I don't study, I feel anxiety. Everything counts. I don't feel good enough. I feel like I'm competing against the kids in my grade," freshman Nicole Gorbato said. The school with the highest amount of national merit scholars, millions of dollars in scholarship money and students competing in international competitions ranging from math to debate induces extreme stress on its students.

Every student here experiences some form of pulling an all-nighter to finish science fair or waking up at 5 a.m. to get to the 5K walk-a-thon for their required service hours. No matter if your an athlete, actor or engineer, the school teaches rigor.

The school can be equally as rigorous while providing support to students who feel like they are hitting a 10 on the stress scale. A simple effort to ward

lowering our "5.8" is the meetings where students could discuss topics such as anxiety. Students meet during lunch or after school and discuss these issues. Guidance counselors are in the room serving as moderators, ensuring the conversation is a safe space for all.

While the school already offers semester meetings for students with teacher, parent or counselor recommendation for debilitating student anxiety, it is not marketed enough to be fully accessible.

Beyond this, only having meetings per semester is a problem in itself. Student anxiety fluctuates throughout the year, if the meetings are offered more often, then more students can receive help with managing their anxiety. If you feel uncomfortable with a group conversation then you can have a one-on-one meeting with your guidance counselor.

"Students are able to meet with their guidance counselors during independent study, elective periods or after school. In case of emergency a student can secure a pass from their teacher to visit with guidance," Mrs. Villalobos said.

Another option is creating club sponsored events addressing anxiety. SGA, GSA and Hope club already took initiative in starting the conversation by sponsoring a speaker on suicide prevention. The speaker will come in to talk to seventh, eighth, freshman and sophomore students on Nov. 7.

Mrs. Blum also encourages using club platforms to start the conversation. She is open to speaker events addressing the problem, but notes students need to plan ahead to book locations and raise money for speakers. We have the opportunities to address anxiety, we just need to use them.

The student body is a greater victim of the stress epidemic by the school's rigorous nature. There is a solution. Creating school sanctioned discussions of mental health issues is the way to strengthen our community and get some relief.

