

## **TIPS FROM THE DEAN:** **Start the Semester Off on the Right Foot**

Classes have started in earnest, and, as you will all soon discover, things are going to get very busy, very fast! Before that happens, take a few moments to plan ahead, organize yourself, and guarantee that you will have a successful semester.

### **1) Organize your calendar**

If you don't have a calendar, get one! Whether you use g-cal or a paper planner, you should get into the habit of entering important meetings, deadlines and events into your calendar.

Now is the time to look through your syllabi and make a note of your assignments and exams. You'll get a good sense of the shape of the semester. When are your busy weeks? What can you do to plan ahead?

### **2) Set your semester goals**

Set reasonable and manageable goals for yourself. These vary for everyone, but it may help to think of your long-term goals in terms of categories:

Academic/intellectual life

Health

Creativity

Family and Friends

As you think about your semester-long goals, I urge you to be realistic and manage your expectations. "I'm going to get straight As and become the president of the "ABC" extra-curricular and run 5 miles everyday" might leave you feeling disappointed if you don't meet those goals.

Think, instead, about small ways you can improve. More realistic goals:

"I'd like to be able to conduct a 5-10 minute conversation in the language I'm studying by December."

"I'd like to make it a point not to go more than 2 days without working out."

"I want to take an hour a week and face time with my siblings at home."

### **3) Try to regularize your sleep schedule**

There is so much to do here at Yale, and juggling academics and extra-curriculars often means students try to burn the candle at both ends. I will repeat this often in Monday Musings, but the best thing you can do for yourself is to get some sleep. Real sleep! Regular sleep! **8 hours** of sleep!

You will feel calmer, you will retain more information, and your brain will just work better.

Often, I talk to students who complain that they suffer from periodic insomnia. When they describe their schedule to me, it seems like a jigsaw puzzle—they get up and go to bed at a different hour every day. Do your best to go to bed and get up at the same hour every day. Once you get used to this schedule, you'll find your body naturally gets tired around the same time every day. When that happens, don't force yourself to stay away—that is not the moment to caffeinate and “push through”! Instead, listen to your body and just get some rest. Your mind, which will be much clearer when you wake up, will thank you!

Other tips on getting a good night's sleep:

- a. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day (yes, even on weekends).
- b. Stop using electronics before bed/in bed.  
Mute your texts and alerts and don't pick up your phone in the middle of the night. Nothing is happening that you have to deal with at 2 am!
- c. Sleep in a dark room. Close your blinds; hide any blinking lights.
- d. Keep your room on the cool side
- e. Avoid drinking caffeine in the afternoon and evening.
- f. Take a warm shower before bed. The change in body temperature from warm to cool will help you sleep better.
- g. If you feel sleepy, go to sleep! Listen to your body's natural rhythms.

#### **4) Eat breakfast**

Low blood sugar doesn't help anyone's mood or concentration.

If you just -can't- eat right when you get up, pack yourself a snack (yogurt, fruit, granola) to eat after you've been up for a while.

#### **5) Schedule some weekly exercise**

It will help you manage sleep and stress. It doesn't have to be every day, or hours at a time, but do try to do something a few times a week. Make it social! Join IMs, or a Club sport, and get to know other students.

#### **6) Go outside**

Go outside, get as much sunshine as you can, and breathe the fresh air. Getting as much sunshine as you can during the day will help stave off the winter blues once the cold, dark days get here. And as long as you are dressed properly, the winter weather can be invigorating! Walk to East Rock and check out some of the local neighborhood places. It will feel good to “get away” from campus, even if you are only a few minutes away.

#### **7) Make sure to leave time for fun, friends and family**

This is so important. It's easy to get caught up in work and stress and cut out friends and family. Don't! Talking to others will make you feel so much better; everyone here

is in the same boat, and isolating yourself will not help, I promise. Talking to family and friends about your concerns is a great way to keep you grounded and remind you there is life beyond Yale.

### **8) Ask for help**

There are so many people on campus who want to help you, including me! Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any worries or concerns. Nothing is too big or too small, and I am happy to help.