

Take a Pause: Small Things Matter



For students dealing with the new normal in flexible education, the tendency to become overwhelmed with the demands of schoolwork and other responsibilities is high.

Student leaders Franchesca Garcia and Lean Jane Pantorilla share their strategies for coping with stress.

"For the past three weeks, things have been hard for me, pretty much for everyone. The constant notification bell from a new posted assessment; The unceasing rise of the number that everyone has been seeing at the right side of the screen; The never-ending need to go to Google to completely understand the daily lessons; The tedious meetings that would extend beyond two hours; The need to fulfill the role of a daughter, a sister, a son, a brother, a partner, and a friend; and the 'I-need-to-responsibly-fulfill-this pressure' that come along these things," Franchesca admitted.

Amid all these, she encouraged her fellow Lasallians to take a breather and likened the break to the familiar use of the semicolon in a sentence.

"To read a semi-colon is to pause for a while before continuing to the succeeding sentences ahead (as you have experienced upon reading this article). To deal with the abovementioned is to pause for a while before continuing to the succeeding days ahead-- before continuing on the assessments, commitments, and all the other responsibilities. Every day I'm telling myself it will always be okay to rest, no matter how long, for everyone has thy paces. Every day I'm telling myself it will always be okay to pause, as long as there exists a mindset to continue, still. To pause and breathe a little, but also to continue."

Lean, in her experience as a student leader, talked about the expectations that people have about Self-Care.

"The thing about self-care is... it is glamorized. If most people don't see it as a well-deserved spa session or full-blown mukbang, it is a three-day or a week-long hibernation from social media. Don't get me wrong - those count as self-care, too. But self-care will not always be comfortable, nor will always be pleasurable. Most of the time, we cannot afford it. In other times, it is acknowledging that most of our problems right now should not be our problem anyways, and so we hold people accountable. That is self-care too, and probably the kind of care we all aspire to give and receive," she said.

Instead of aiming for something grand, she said she starts with something simple – earmarking one brave thing at a time.

"For every day, one brave thing. And, this brave thing does not necessarily have to be groundbreaking: so long as it's something I believe needed to be done at the moment, it's brave. Sometimes, my bravery is acknowledging that I need some rest. Sometimes, it is getting out of bed and sending that email. On most days, it is keeping up with the news even if we can barely keep up with our studies," she said.

"That one brave thing will vary for every one of us, and that is okay. As for me, it's fluctuated between taking that well-deserved rest and pulling an all-nighter, both of which, if I had to say, took a lot of bravery in itself. Forget getting into the right mindset - in the middle of a pandemic, what can we expect? I can tell you all the big things that we have to weather even before the school year started, but you have to understand: no big thing was ever accomplished without the small things. One step at a time sounds good in the paper, but it is hard in practice," Lean added.

She likened her technique to playing a game of UNO!

"Sometimes, self-care is the harsh truth, and we must ask ourselves these things. Yes, we have all set our sights on big things. Great things. Extraordinary things. But for now, send that email. Catch up with that assessment. Take your vitamins, your medicine, your nap, or your willpower. Show up at that meeting, towel hair or no. Show up to that blank word document, to your family pet, to the dinner table, to class, to yourself. There is no step-by-step guide on how to be a fully functional student, how to construct the perfect routine, or how to achieve the perfect setup. Perhaps for some, there is, but the reality is that most people don't. So do your one brave thing at a time, and let it compound. If one assessment can easily turn to ten, pull out a reverse UNO card. Skip a turn. Let the cards stack if you have to. Help a friend. Lose the cards one turn at a time, then scream Uno! Then, get rid of that last card too," she shared.

