

## The Cautionary Tale of How Burnout Can Haunt You Decades Later

By Lisa Knowles, MGA Psychology Student

If you ever wonder what burnout looks like over time, allow me to present myself as Exhibit A. My story begins in the early two thousands when Middle Georgia State University was still Macon State and I was a brand new Georgia resident operating on caffeine, avoidance, and the unearned confidence of someone who had never met adulthood, which is the exact moment a therapist would start taking very detailed notes.

My first semesters were basically a developmental psychology case study. I was adjusting to a new state, new people, and new academic expectations. I also discovered that adulthood requires planning, sleep, and something called balance. I had none of these. I heard about study abroad and wanted to go more than anything, but life redirected me to diapers, bottles, and a very different kind of cultural immersion.

By fall of 2003 I was a single mother taking classes full time, working overnight full time, and parenting full time. This schedule violated several known laws of biology. My stress response system was operating at a level that would make any biopsychology professor quietly whisper oh no. My support system was so thin that I once left class because someone called to inform me that my baby had a dirty diaper. That was the moment I should have realized burnout was not approaching. It had already unpacked its suitcase and was eating snacks in my living room.

Finals week was the grand finale. I dropped my daughter at daycare, sat down to study, and immediately fell asleep. I slept through every final. All of them. I ended up with a 1.2 GPA, a score that basically said "Girl, we need to talk." Instead of asking for help, I withdrew from school and convinced myself that I was the world's biggest failure.

Life continued. I rebuilt, returned to school, earned my associate degree, and eventually came back to MGA. I was shocked to learn that after twenty years and a university name change, I was still on academic probation. Apparently my past had a better memory than I did.

This time I approached school with coping skills, communication, and a support system. I contacted my advisor, reached out to professors, asked questions, and stayed involved. I proved to myself that the past does not define the present. Students are human. Professors are human. Burnout happens. What matters is reaching out, using your resources, and remembering that resilience lasts longer than any setback.

## Beat the Burnout

Use psychological principles to combat college burnout!

- When studying, try "chunking" information such as reading five pages in the textbook rather than reading the entire chapter. Keep reviewing and adding a few pages each day until the full chapter is complete.
- Keep a "Done List" rather than a "To Do List." This feels less daunting and show productivity which can motivate you to keep working.
- Moderate exercise helps alleviate stress. No exercise or over-exercising can make things worse.
- Manage your energy, not just your time. Study and complete work in blocks of time. Do not try to cram in a multi-hour study session. Schedule rest and breaks and make them just as important as study and work.

## You're Joking!

Why was Waldo going to start psychotherapy?

-He wanted to find himself

## Psychology in the News

"Researchers report that vagus nerve stimulation helped many people with long-standing, treatment-resistant depression feel better—and stay better—for at least two years." Click [here](#).

"A new study found that young people who made up for lost weekday sleep had a significantly lower risk of depression." Click [here](#).

# Student Spotlight



Do you know of a psychology student who would be a great candidate for our Student Spotlight? Let us know! We would love to showcase them in our next issue! Please email recommendations to Amanda Avera at [amanda.chase@mga.edu](mailto:amanda.chase@mga.edu)



Tori Howard is a senior Criminal Justice major who is minoring in psychology. She plans to become an attorney and is already making positive impacts on the MGA campus and her community. She has worked at the district attorney's office in her community and has created a Pre-Law Club at MGA's Cochran Campus. This is an exciting and informative club that holds meetings, organizes fun events, and gives members valuable information on topics related to law and law school.

Tori is also interested in psychology, "I really enjoy seeing how criminal justice and psychology connect. I'm interested because it helps me understand people on a deeper level, their behavior, decisions, and the impact of mental health. Since I plan to become a lawyer, I think having that background and insight will make me better prepared to work with clients and communities in an impactful way."

Fun Fact: Tori has played over 1,000 hours in Animal Crossing: New Horizons!

We wish Tori all the best in her future career!

## Today in Psychology History

**January 27, 1982:** Rosalynn Carter is presented with the APA Presidential Citation for her work to improve mental health services.

**January 23, 1970:** The journal "Cognitive Psychology" was first published.

**January 25, 1909:** The first White House Conference on Children was held with an address given by President Theodore Roosevelt. The conference discussed the care of children who were dependent on the state.

**January 21, 1885:** The word "psychopath" appears in print for its current meaning in the Pall Mall Gazette.

**January 21, 1850:** Dortha Dix gives a presentation to the Nova Scotia legislature pressing them to build psychiatric hospital.

**January 11, 1842:** William James, the father of American psychology is born.

# Grow Your Research Portfolio

Are you interested in assisting with a psychological research project? Our faculty need your input! Dr. Scott Hinze, Dr. Heather Ness-Maddox, Dr. Chi Cheung, and Dr. Paul Gladden are conducting a wide variety of research projects and are looking for student assistance.

Working on a professor-led research project is a valuable addition to a student's resume' and career. Masters programs and future employers look favorably on projects such as these because it shows that students can think critically, work in groups, and communicate in a professional manner. Jump in and get involved!

## Memory and Cognition Lab (directed by Dr. Scott Hinze)

Dr. Scott Hinze is the director of the Memory and Cognition lab. His primary research interests are in memory, study strategies, acquiring and avoiding misinformation, and learning from text. Any students interested in how we think, or how we learn complex information, may be a good fit for this lab. New students may be interested in continuing a recent or ongoing project, like those listed below. Recent and Ongoing Research

1. How do different study strategies affect memory and cognitive effort, measured by pupil dilation?
2. How do people deal with misleading information?
3. What are the effects of learning from study strategies (e.g., self-explanation) completed on a screen, compared to paper?
4. How do students learn from different text genres (anecdotes vs. informative stories vs. textbook descriptions)? If interested in potentially serving as a research assistant, contact [scott.hinze@mga.edu](mailto:scott.hinze@mga.edu).

## LEGO Lab (directed by Dr. Heather Ness-Maddox)

Dr. Heather Ness-Maddox researches how people understand stories across various types of media as well as the effects stories can have on their audiences. Her specific interests are in visual Literacy, Emotion, Graphic narratives, and Other topics (i.e., LEGO lab). Her current research projects include

1. Creating a readability scale for comic books and graphic novels. Interested students would help code and categorize images in comic book stories.
2. A research study involving understanding video games, lead by another student researcher. Interested students would help the student researcher run participants in the LEGO lab room on the Macon campus and help code participant transcripts

Students are welcome to participate in ongoing projects and to develop their own ideas for related studies. Students interested in this area will gain experience generating research questions, analyzing data, and interpreting results. It is preferred if students have taken PSYC 3001 and/or 3002, but students expressing a willingness to take initiative and work in a team setting will be given special consideration. If interested in gaining experience as a research assistant, contact [heather.nessmaddox@mga.edu](mailto:heather.nessmaddox@mga.edu).

## Strategic Mindset, Math Learning and Vaccine Hesitancy (Directed by Dr. Chi Cheung)

I am currently working on 3 lines of research (see below). I am happy to help students develop their own research projects as well.

1. Strategic mindset in learning: Strategic mindset is the propensity to look for better strategies to improve one's performance. Data showed that students with a strategic mindset are more likely to use metacognitive strategies and have better academic outcome. This project aims at understanding the factors that contribute to the development of strategic mindset.
2. Mathematics and Visual Cognition: Previous studies have shown that perceptual qualities of a mathematical expression, such the spacing between the operands, can affect performance in computation. This project aims at testing how visual perception may support the cognitive processes for solving math problems.
3. Vaccine hesitancy: According to the WHO, vaccine hesitancy refers to the delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite availability of vaccination services. This project aims at understanding factors that contributes to vaccine hesitancy.

If interested in potentially serving as a research assistant, contact [chingai.cheung@mga.edu](mailto:chingai.cheung@mga.edu).

The Sona Research Participation System allows psychology students to earn bonus points by participating in psychology studies (if they are enrolled in a course that uses the Sona system) and to recruit participants for their own research projects. For more information, please contact [chingai.cheung@mga.edu](mailto:chingai.cheung@mga.edu).