

SPECIAL EDITION

MARCH 2021

The Lasso

Your student newspaper since 1914

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How Texas is failing its residents: Mental health edition (3)

Resources on-campus, in Denton, or from the comfort of your home (9)

Take a chill pill! Visit the most relaxing spots on campus (11)



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MENTAL MONEY WHY THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE SHOULD INVEST MORE IN THE MENTAL HEALTH OF RESIDENTS

by Laura Pearson

Texas is one of the highest-ranked states for the amount of people with mental health problems, but almost the lowest ranked for access to treatment, according to Mental Health America. Texas is ranked No. 2 for the prevalence of mental health problems within the state but is ranked 50 in access to mental health care.

These are unsettling statistics, and the bottom line is, the U.S. and state government needs to put more funds into mental health care.

Lots of insurance companies don't cover things such as medications for mental disorders and treatments such as therapy. Half of adults with a mental disorder were unable to receive treatments because of costs, according to Mental Health America in 2017. People with mental health problems have 2.5 to 7 times greater odds of facing barriers to treatment, such as not having access to a primary physician, delayed treatments because of costs and not having access to needed medication.

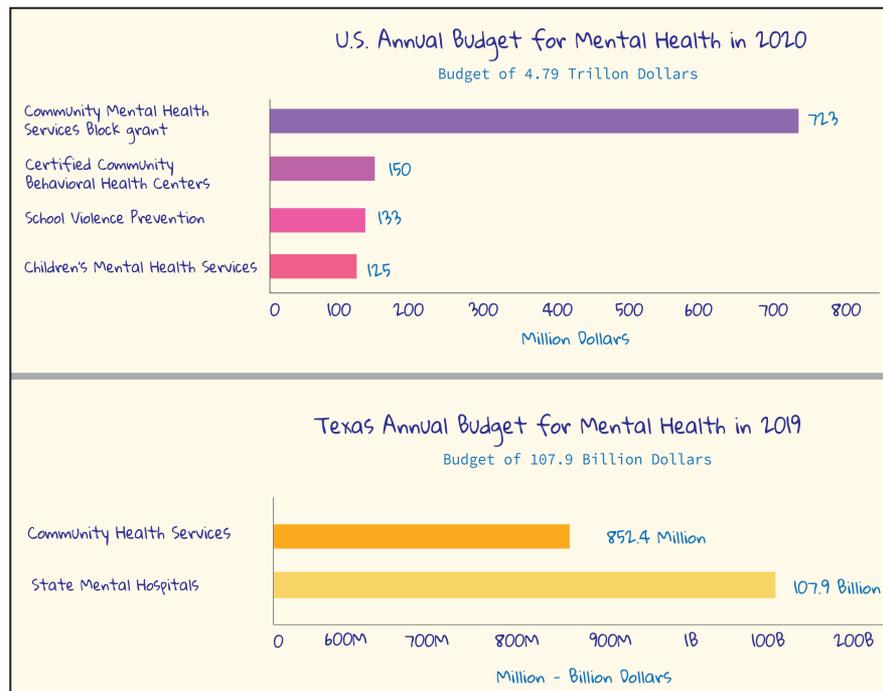
Along with this, there are a lot of problems with youth being able to access treatment. More than 64% of youth with major depression were unable to get treatment and 7.9% of youth had private insurance that did not cover mental health, according to Mental Health America.

With so many people experiencing mental illness, the government doesn't always do a good job at providing care for these people to make treatment easily accessible and affordable.

The U.S. annual budget for mental health in 2020 includes \$723 million for the Community Mental Health Services Block grant, \$150 million for Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers, \$125 million for Children's Mental Health Services and \$133 million for school violence prevention. This was out of the U.S. budget of \$4.79 trillion dollars.

For Texas in 2019, \$1.3 billion was spent for community health services and \$852.4 million dollars was spent for state mental hospitals. This was out of a budget of \$107.9 billion dollars.

Compared to both the U.S. and state's total budget, these funds for mental health are significantly low, especially since suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. Up to 47,511 Americans died from suicide in 2019 with 1,38 million attempts. In Texas, 3,778 people died from suicide, and suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the state.



Graphic by Drexiel Desquitado

Both the state and federal government need to take more actions and provide more funds for mental health programs, medications and treatments, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are millions of people who suffer from all kinds of mental illnesses, and the government needs to do a better job at helping them.

The government can reallocate some of the funds used for the military and use those funds to provide for mental health. We are already ranked number one in the world for military resources, so the government needs to shift their focus to their own citizens. The U.S. military budget for 2020 is \$695.1 billion dollars, which is a \$19.5 billion dollar increase from 2019. Although defense is important, this large and unnecessary increase in funding could have gone to mental health programs to help American citizens' health and wellbeing.

The state of Texas can induce a sin tax on alcohol, since many people with mental illness abuse alcohol. Texas already has a sin tax on cigarettes and tobacco products, which brought in \$1.5 billion dollars in 2015, so why not create a sin tax for alcohol, too? The revenue from these taxes can be used for mental health funding, which can cause a big increase for the mental health budget since alcohol is widely consumed.

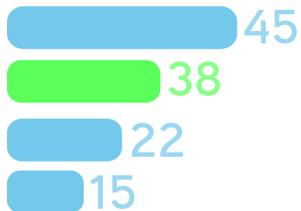
Mental illness is a serious issue in both Texas and the U.S., and the government needs to do a better job at helping these people. They have failed so many people through lack of help and loss, and they must provide more funds for treatment in the future.

MENTAL HEALTH TRIVIA

by Deanna West

We asked Lasso readers to answer questions about mental health in the United States. Do their answers line up with what you would have guessed? Do the correct answers to these questions — appearing in green — surprise you?

What rank is Texas when it comes to accessible mental health care?



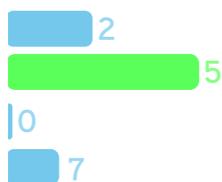
What is the most common mental illness in the U.S.?



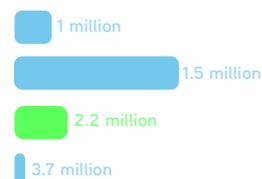
Who is more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety / depression?



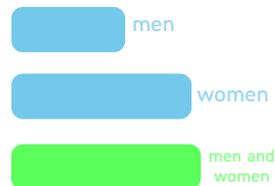
Women are ___ times more likely to be diagnosed with depression than men



How many U.S. adults are diagnosed with OCD?



Who is more likely to be diagnosed with OCD?



What is the most misdiagnosed mental illness?



The Lasso is hiring!

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Qualifications: Strong journalistic reporting, writing, editing, grammar, and word usage skills. Must be enrolled in 6 credit hours.

Preferred qualifications:
Strong knowledge of Associated Press style.
Proficiency in Adobe InDesign, photojournalism and page layout experience.

15 hours/week, \$12/hr

Download the application at twulasso.com/careers and email your completed application, three references and two writing samples to jalderman@twu.edu. **Deadline April 1 by 5 p.m.**

The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for The Lasso and twulasso.com content, production, planning and coordination. He or she is responsible for seeing that the Lasso digital and print products come out, on time, as scheduled, with content thoroughly covering the TWU community, fairly and thoroughly reported, well-written and well-presented, and free of error.

Health is our wealth



“My favorite self care activity is driving. I like to go on drives by myself when I’m feeling overwhelmed or need to clear my head. I’ll put on my favorite songs and sing along as I drive around Denton until I feel more at peace. I really only listen to music when I’m driving so it’s always a fresh experience.”

Anissa Clark, Page Editor

“My favorite self care activities are to sleep, watch shows on Netflix, and play with my two dogs. Another one I like to do is spend some time with friends and family to just have fun, eat and be stress free.”

Drexel Desquitado, Graphic Designer



“For me, I have a couple of favorite self care activities. I cook, make coffee or tea, take hot baths, or listen to music. I usually find myself listening to music, no matter what the occasion, so one might argue that listening to music is my favorite self-care activity, but I think each of these play a role at specific times.”

Katelyn Garst, Managing Editor

“I’m not great at being as consistent as I’d like with self-care activities, but exercise is one I make sure to do at least four or five days a week since the benefits for my mental and physical health are enormous.”

Amber Gaudet, Editor-in-Chief





“I have a thing for crazy steamy showers. If I’m trying to relax and my shower isn’t padding my lungs with scorching humidity, I don’t want it. Afterward, I’ll use my favorite body lotion (eucalyptus and spearmint stress release body cream from Bath & Body Works a.k.a. the best scented lotion in the entire world), choose a comfort-scented wax cube for my wax warmer and stretch away all the worry and discomfort from my limbs.”

Gakenia Njenga, Copy Editor

“I enjoy exercising to take care of myself. I started going to the gym with my roommate at the beginning of the semester, and it’s the first thing I do every morning. It makes me feel really good for the rest of the day, and it overall makes me happier.”

Laura Pearson, Reporter



“My favorite self-care activity is doing my skin care routine. I enjoy putting on face masks while playing my favorite music to relax and unwind after a long day. I am a huge skin care junkie because it allows me to set aside time to take care of myself. It doesn’t even have to be a super elaborate skin care routine and it’s not too time consuming.”

Sarah Pham, Photographer

“My favorite coping strategy would have to be reading or listening to music. I love to read fiction because it clears my mind from the stress around me and with music, it’s easy to get lost in the lyrics and rhythm. On Sundays, I take a self-care day to relax with a facemask and maybe paint my nails.”

Deanna West, Engagement Editor



keeping our brains happy and healthy

EXAM BLUES

Strategies to tackle test anxiety before your next major exam *by Gakenia Njenga*

Academic examinations are reported to be one of the biggest stressors among students, with 16-20% admitting to experiencing high levels of test anxiety and 18% experiencing levels moderate to high. While not entirely curable, psychologists have suggested many solutions to relieve feelings of uncertainty and doubt during testing, one being the right study strategies.

Effective strategies best center around what's important, what information needs to be left out and what information needs to be retained, visiting Texas Woman's University psychology lecturer Otter Day said.

"The best way to pick up on the information you need is to stay on the task at hand," Day said. "If you know you're supposed to be studying and you stay focused on studying, then you're going to easily identify as what's most important and you're less likely to be distracted."

If you find yourself experiencing test anxiety, here are some suggested study strategies that may help to relieve it:

Handwriting notes

As efficient as typing notes may be, it is not recommended by many psychologists as typing notes leads to less retention than handwritten notes. Writing information by hand is more effective as the mind is more likely to shorten words and paraphrase in a unique way that your brain will better understand. Doing so is one of the best methods for deeper processing.

However, if one chooses to type their notes, it is recommended that they take their time and think carefully about what they are typing.

Elaborative rehearsal

This strategy is all about taking what you've learned and applying it to something you already know. Doing this can help you create stronger connections between your study material and your memory, creating long-term memories that will stick with you. One of the best ways to elaboratively rehearse is to connect your studies to yourself, Day said.

"If we can take the information we're learning, apply it to a personal, lived experience we've had, we are so much more likely to be able to recall that information when we need to," Day said. "Because it's attached to us, that information is, for sure, more important to us."

Taking breaks

Spacing out your study time, whether it's over a number of days or hours, gives the brain time to analyze and process new information in a way that will make it stick.



Otter Day

"When we study continuously for prolonged periods of time, we don't allow our brain the opportunity to create storage for it," Day said.

Studying for as little as 45 minutes at a time can still require a resting period, even if it is as short as 10 minutes. Day suggests stepping completely away from the material which can actually restore some of the energy needed to continue retaining information.

Proper sleep

It's better to study for only three or four hours and get sufficient rest before a test than to stay up all night studying and take a test with no rest at all, Day said.

Sleep is when the mind creates memories and sleeping allows the brain's subconscious to make connections between the information studied and related information from past experiences, creating a detailed and permanent web of knowledge that the mind can then refer back to when needed.

Practice tests

Using practice tests or quizzing your knowledge can help perfect your timing, build mental stamina, track your progress and help you become more comfortable in a testing environment.

"If you know you're going to take a multiple-choice test, find some multiple-choice questions that are related to what you're studying," Day said.

It is known that practice makes perfect, so what better way to prepare for a test than to rehearse for it?

safe spaces

Local resources to turn to for help with mental health *by Laura Pearson*

Mental health care can be expensive, and lots of people might have trouble finding access to help that is affordable. With that in mind, here is a list of resources that are available at Texas Woman's University, in Denton and online.

TWU

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): CAPS is a free resource at TWU that offers services such as short-term therapy, couples therapy and family therapy. They are currently only doing video chats and phone calls. They are open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Tuesday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. You can reach them at 940-898-3801.

Student Health Services: Not only does Student Health Services offer physical care, they also offer mental health care, too. They provide mental health services for depression, anxiety, panic attacks, ADHD and helping students transition into college. They are located in Jones Hall in Suite 120, and you can contact them at 940-898-3826. They are open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and Friday from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Counseling and Family Therapy Clinic: The Counseling and Family Clinic offers low-cost counseling for children and adults, including family, group, couple and individual services. They also offer play therapy for children from ages 3 to 11, and expressive art therapy to adults and adolescents. They are currently using Telehealth, and you can contact them at 940-898-2600.

Denton

Reflections Counseling of Denton: Reflections Counseling of Denton offers multiple services, including services for depression, anxiety, body image issues, anger and trauma. A counseling session ranges from \$65 to \$125 for specific counselors, and appointments are available Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. They are located at 2306 N. Locust Street.

CCD Counseling: CCD Counseling offers free family counseling through their Family Tree program. Individual counseling is \$100 an hour, and appointments are available Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. They are located at 1512 Scripture Street.

Online

Better Help: Better Help is online therapy that has live chat sessions, phone calls and video chats. You are able to answer a few questions to help match you to a counselor that is the best for you. It typically costs \$60 to \$90 per week, and their website is www.betterhelp.com.

Talkspace: Talkspace is online therapy that has live video chats, messaging with your therapist and phone calls with your therapist. You can pick your desired therapist, and they also offer evaluations from psychiatrists for medications. It costs around \$65 a week and they also accept certain insurances. Their website is www.talkspace.com.

Open Path: Open Path is a nonprofit organization that offers therapy to members. A lifelong membership is a one-time fee of \$59, and you are then able to schedule an appointment with a therapist for typically around \$30 to \$60 a session. Their website is openpathcollective.org.



Student Health Services. Photo by Sarah Pham.

WHEN STRESS HURTS

by Deanna West

Physical signs you should slow down and take time to decompress

Many students can tell you how much they use stress as motivation to complete schoolwork — I know I definitely can. But stress can also be overwhelming. We all have those deadlines approaching too soon, maybe running off little sleep, a huge exam coming up or a big presentation.

Stress is inevitable for everyone, but people can experience stress in different ways. Here's a list of five common symptoms of stress.

1. Depression and anxiety

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America defines depression as an illness in which an individual experiences a persistent and severe low mood. Anxiety, on the other hand, is characterized by feelings of overwhelming dread.

Anxiety and depression can be present at the same time as well because of high comorbidity, meaning that by having one of the conditions a person is more likely to suffer from the other condition.

2. Memory and concentration problems

Stress can contribute to focusing problems and that's definitely not what you want right before an exam or job interview!

People who are stressed have a harder time learning because stress creates problems in turning short-term memories into long-term memories. However, we students can admit to cramming before finals, and there could be some benefit to that. A study done by Grant S. Shields and a few others showed that when stress is

linked to the study material, memory can improve. Post-encoding information under stress can actually improve memory formation and retrieval.

3. Insomnia

Let's face it, if you're stressed, chances are you are not sleeping well. Insomnia is defined as persistent difficulty with falling asleep, maintenance or inadequate quality of sleep.

Insomnia caused by stress can also have side effects for the daytime such as feelings of fatigue, irritability/mood disturbances, aggression, decreased motivation and increased risk for errors.

Not only can stress cause memory problems but lack of sleep can also contribute to concentration problems, depression and anxiety.

4. Aches, colds and rapid heartbeat

Feeling stressed can drain your body's energy and leave you feeling frail and this affects how your body functions physically. When the body is under stress it reacts with the "fight-or-flight response," increasing the heart rate, breathing, blood pressure and muscle tension. Heart palpitations are the feeling of fast, fluttering or pounding heartbeats that can be caused by stress, anxiety and other factors.

According to the American Psychological Association, any significant amount of stress ranging from a few days to years can affect the body's immune system. When we're stressed, the immune system's ability to fight off antigens is reduced, making us more susceptible to infections.

5. Acne

Yep, it's back, just when you thought the teenage acne days were over. The cycle of stress causing acne, then stressing out even more about breaking out is never fun. When you're under stress, your body produces more hormones, like cortisol, causing the skin to produce more oils.

The temptation to pop your pimples can be hard to resist, but not squeezing them can promote better healing. Washing your face gently, not touching your face and wearing loose clothing to reduce sweating are also some ways to help combat those pesky breakouts.

As you can see, stress can manifest into many different kinds of symptoms. For mindfulness tips on studying, flip to page 8.



Photo courtesy of Pixy.org

Cozy corners

by Gakenia Njenga

The most relaxing spots on Texas Woman's University's Denton campus

If you're anything like the typical college student, you're regularly exhausted. Staying in bed can start to feel debilitating and going to the same place to get some ease can get a bit repetitive. Luckily, Texas Woman's University's Denton campus offers many more calming spots than you might think where you can loosen up and recharge.

Here are some of the most relaxing spots on campus for you to visit and unwind:

Botanical Gardens

Adjacent to Little-Chapel-in-the-Woods, the campus' Botanical Gardens feature stunning flora of the most vibrant colors and stone benches next to a delicate pond for overlooking the aquatic life that occupies the water. The garden is the perfect place for someone who enjoys relaxing in the presence of nature.

Redbud Lane

More likely known as the long sidewalk that runs within the heart of the campus, Redbud Lane not only offers a galore of the school's most towering trees but also serves as a great place for a breather in between schedules. Located between some of the school's main buildings like the CFO, the ASB, Old Main Building and the Ann Stuart Science Complex, Redbud Lane has benches for sitting, grassy hills for laying and fresh air for inhaling.

Turtle Pond

How could one attend TWU and not ever take a second to stop by the adorable Turtle Pond? Right next to the library lies the Turtle Pond filled with everyone's favorite hard-shelled swimmers, as well as fish, beautiful greenery and the tiniest

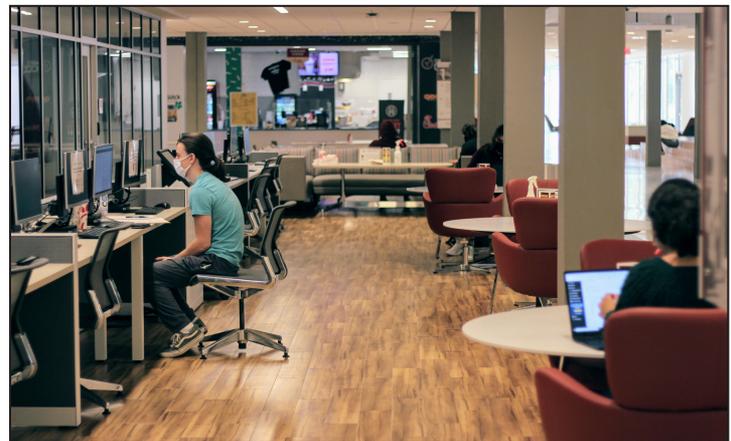


A turtle pond by the Blagg-Huey Library. Photo by Sarah Pham.

functioning fountain on campus. The pond is the place for those who don't mind spending their downtime in the presence of others as it's located in one of the most active places on campus, which also makes it a great spot for those who enjoy people-watching. Just pull up an Adirondack chair under the cooling shade—or toasty sun—recline and drift off to the flowing sounds of the fountain.

Quiet Lounge - Hubbard Hall

If nature isn't your thing, no worries. Try the quiet lounge on the first floor of Hubbard Hall. The first-floor lounge features dome-like swivel chairs and extra-wide single-person loveseats with retractable desks making this place perfect for both a midday break and peaceful study time. The lounge also includes beautiful



Hubbard Hall lounge. Photo by Sarah Pham.

architectural pieces from the original build of Hubbard Hall, making the room surprisingly charming.

Pioneer Hall Balcony

Another great indoor alternative is the balcony in Pioneer Hall. If you don't mind the occasional sounds of echoes, the balcony is one of the most laid-back spots on campus. It's another great place for those who enjoy people-watching or for those who just find entertainment in overlooking the world beneath them.

Children's Section - 1st Floor Library

This may sound a little whacky, but the children's area located at the far left of the first floor of the library is surprisingly calming. The area has large windows that let in an immense amount of natural light and super comfy seats that might be made for children, but fit adults just as well. Surrounded by bright colors and an overall lively atmosphere, the children's area is a great change of pace when it comes to relaxing spots on campus.

Cover design by Drexel Desquitado



KEEP
BEING
BRAVE
~ & ~
Take Care
OF
YOURSELF