

To have a high school love affair with sweating

by Stephanie Kim

Sweat.

Noun.

“Moisture exuded through the pores of the skin, typically in profuse quantities.”

Verb.

“(Of a person) Exude a great deal of strenuous effort.”

In this moment, as I sit here writing this while chomping on my granola bar, I believe I strongly prefer that latter definition.

In my time at New Trier, both definitions have applied to me to astounding degrees (air conditioning can be spotty in parts of the G building, I’ve discovered).

Beyond the physical, “noun” aspect of sweat that I have produced as the result of occasionally sweltering Cross Country meets and practices, the “verb” side of the word is the icing on the cake of the past four years I’ve been here.

I’ve sweated. I’ve been a whole well of sweat since the first time I tripped walking into the F building at the Northfield campus. And to that I say—hoorah! To that I say, it’s okay.

My final takeaway from being

a student here is that it’s okay—even awe-inspiring—to sweat copiously.

There’s this phrase that’s been floating around since the dawn of time: don’t sweat the small stuff. Don’t concern yourself with the insignificant, minute aspects of life.

In fact, there’s a book called “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff Because It’s All Small Stuff” by a writer named Richard Carson (I personally cannot attest to its excellence, but Robin Sharma, bestselling author of “The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari”, most certainly can ☺).

The phrase itself has an incredible message of encouraging a general sense of happiness and satisfaction over the more minuscule of stressors sprinkled throughout a lifetime, like the chemistry final exam that I took in my sophomore year or the second rhetorical analysis of third quarter of my third year.

In retrospect, I do suppose those events would be “small stuff.”

But that’s only in retrospect. Looking at the long, long run of our time alive, moments like those are a drop of rainwater in a backyard pool of a bank-breaking Sheridan Rd.

property.

In those actual scenarios, at the exact points when I needed to turn my junior theme in or needed to jam the fallacies of Bohr’s theory into my last remaining glial cells thirty minutes prior to the chemistry exam, those impending crises felt colossal and life-altering.

And that’s led me to wonder if perspective of the “size” or impact of a second, minute, day, memory of a life is relative, ever-changing, in constant flux and states of elasticity.

Now, in the present, the tiniest memories of sitting against a basement wall with friends downing 10 fl. oz. of water in a hot second are the ones that make me smile until my teeth bare like the hyenas in “Lion King.”

On the contrary, remembering the light fading from my eyes as I skipped FRQ #4 on my AP Biology exam, or the once unbearable pressure of feeling required to improve my GPA in the heat of freshman year—those have become minimal moments to me, when once they were all the moments.

In short, small moments can become big later. Big ones can

shrink to insignificance. Or they can stay as they were originally. Memories cycle through the front of our minds as they please, with each one taking its turn being worth the world to being worth but a penny’s value of our time.

And here goes my final words to my final goodbye.

I refute Richard Carson and the man whose monk sold their luxury car. I vote that we shouldn’t sweat the small stuff — we should sweat all stuff.

Even the junior theme deadline, even the stolen New Trier bumper sticker on the back of one’s Hummer while they were chowing down at Joy Yee’s, even what we’re going to do as a career 40 years down the line, if anything at all.

All stuff is the small stuff, and all stuff is the big stuff, and both extremes and everything in between equates to a life given and lived, to my high school career, and could equate to yours too.

And to sweat over all stuff could end up inducing much stress and anxiety — oh, boy, it sure did for me.

I would say that the trick is to

find a balance of knowing when to sweat and when to take your foot off of the gas pedal; but truthfully, a balance of this kind is one I never struck, and likely will spend my whole life learning how to strike. And I imagine it’s kind of like that way for a lot of you reading this, too.

I do believe, though, that all of us have some Spider-Sense that lets us know when a certain amount of worry and sweating is excessive—so in the process of sweating your way through New Trier, tap into it every once in a blue moon. Make sure you don’t end up sweating so much over your transcript that you end up in a dark recess. Where that threshold is located is unclear, so if you find yourself crossing into a darker, more worrisome frame of mind, don’t “sweat” it — but make sure that you eventually pull yourself out.

And the “noun” side of sweating can be wholly rad. Especially after an (in my case, much-delayed, not particularly impressive) intense workout, mental acrobatics included. After all, nothing gets me perspiring quite like a vein-popping, heart-stopping cutthroat game of Minesweeper.

The perfect montage

by Molly George

Endings provide the perfect opportunity to look back on how an experience has changed you. At the end of high school, I have realized every class we take has the chance to change our lives.

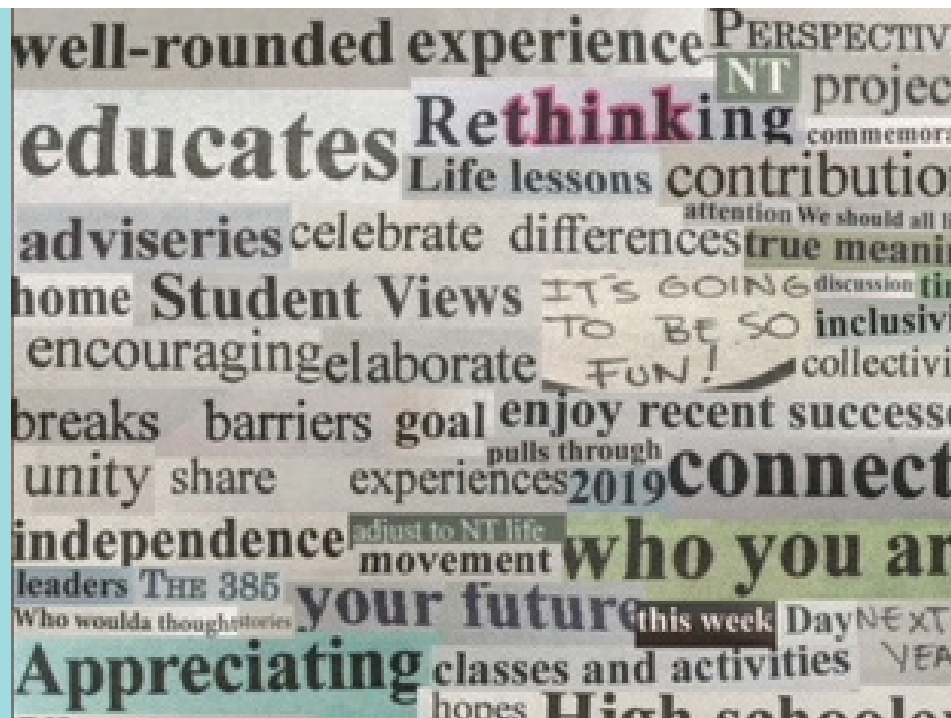
A choir piece might stick with you and come up in a humanities presentation years later, an anatomy lesson can connect to an English reading, math will apply in unexpected areas, and you will find countless coincidences across curricula.

Connections are what make school interesting, whether they’re correlating links between topics of study, personal ties that bring material closer to home, or bonds with best friends in classes. Feeling connected inspires us to do our best work, because we have something or someone to work for when we come to school.

In this building of mixed architecture, nine periods, countless classmates, hundreds of extracurriculars, and endless opportunities, there is so much to pay attention to.

In an imperfect balance of observation and participation, learning and being right, the overwhelming opportunities to connect overlapping ideas are not always noted, but rather experienced in the moment (and that is where the focus should be).

Whether we really notice or not, there will be assignments that relate to the big picture and teachers who change our perspectives and fun free periods spent with friends and things that bring smiles when we reflect on our four years. It all melts into a combination of crazy memories that change shape in retrospect.



Looking back on the montage of my high school highlights is eye opening and I notice all the connections that have been there all along. I’ve believed that the best experiences are new ones, because trying new things tends to lead to new skills, discoveries, and appreciation.

A retrospective realization in response is that my experiences, especially the new ones, have been formed by the moments leading up to them. It’s especially true with the people around me, all striving to learn and have a good time. With the thousands of individual and amazing minds present in this one building, incredible things can happen, as proven by past stories and victories.

We all get to be a part of some of those, and the stories we play a role in will stand out in our own montages as well as others’ as we move forward, full of these memories and experiences.

An experience worth fighting for

by Layla Saqibuddin

When I was 14 years old, just before high school started, I moved to a new neighborhood: my teenage self’s worst nightmare. My little freshman self probably wouldn’t believe me if I told her that I’ve loved every moment at New Trier.

I’ve realized that the fear and uncertainty I felt initially are only natural for any transition in life, whether you move somewhere or just transitioning to high school. Nothing we experience in life will ever be perfect. In fact, I even decided to write a graduation speech to thank NT and everyone I have met along the way. Even though I didn’t get the opportunity to be the commencement speaker for the class, it felt great to audition. I’m lucky enough to have a voice in the school newspaper to express my gratitude.

Anyway, this experience wasn’t easy, but I think I was able to manage this uncertainty by recognizing how important it was to enjoy the mystery of life. It helped

me maintain a positive attitude in difficult times, and led to friendships with other students, teachers, and faculty.

Some of my best friends tease me about how I always smile and say “hi” to everyone. Life is so beautiful, and when I step back to appreciate it, I can’t help but smile. My law and justice teacher once told our class he gives love to all his classes, and this, the importance of telling people we love and appreciate them, really meant a lot to me.

The endless cheering and encouragement my cross country coaches and teammates have given me, despite the fact that I finished last in almost every race.

It was never something I expected to experience when moving, but it made me feel like I belonged.

That’s the biggest struggle we’ll all face: how to lift up the world we live in. We have to remember the struggles and complexity people face around the world.

Thanks to my Lit Film class, watching movies is one of my hobbies. One of my favorite movies is “Scent of a Woman” which has a scene where a young student, Charlie, prevents a crotchety, retired veteran, Frank, from taking his own life. He repeats the advice that Frank had once given him earlier in the movie, saying “If you get all tangled up, just tango on.”

Sometimes, we make mistakes. We feel scared and uncertain. We don’t know where to go in life. All we have is our ability to tango on and hope for the best. There’s always a solution and you are never ever alone. And as I look back on how far I have come, every day, I am full of gratitude and hope for the future. I can truly say with a full heart that I can’t imagine not moving.

I’m 17 now, and while I don’t know everything, the four years since freshman year have taught me a few things: we have to do our best to see the humanity in others. It’s okay to show emotion and express how we feel. It’s okay to be uncertain of our future. Sometimes we have to let go of our worry and fill that void with awe for the mystery of the world around us. We have to latch onto appreciation for the little gestures from the people around us and I believe that’s what life is all about. Finding happiness in the little fragments of everyday life.

Every day I wake up knowing how privileged I am to be alive. I am surrounded by family and friends who support me and to be surrounded by a school environment who allows me to reach for my dreams is an absolute privilege. To be given every opportunity to succeed is something I will never take for granted.

The New Trier News

Published Fridays during the school year by the students of New Trier Township High School, 385 Winnetka Avenue, Illinois 60093.

Correspondence may be directed to the New Trier News Office, Room 011, or by calling (847) 784-2278.

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