

Staff Editorial

It's who you are, not where you go

As seniors receive admissions decisions from colleges, juniors complete extensive research papers, and sophomores just begin the college search process, our worlds can seem pretty hectic. Despite gallant efforts by advisers and post high school counseling to make the application process seem less cutthroat competition, it still feels this way for most people.

It feels like there are an innumerable amount of problematic elements related to the college process. From religious College Confidential refreshing indicative of obsession and anxiety to celebrity scandals that emphasize the way wealth rigs the process, these seemingly small ideas weave their way into our language, our culture, the way we treat others, and the way we treat ourselves. As a result, friends are seen as rivals and our learning environment is negatively impacted.

Instead of focusing on working together to help the class learn, it becomes more important that the individuals succeed. It's easy to get so wrapped up in the whole process that what becomes most important are grades and not people.

There are always those factors that we can't control. We can't help it if our parents monitor every assignment and put unhealthy amounts of pressure on us to achieve some amorphous goal of "success." We can't help it if we, ourselves, have college-induced anxiety. But we can control the little things we tell ourselves when we catch ourselves thinking that way. We can make the effort to think about how we talk about the college process in our own heads and with others.

When lunch table talks turn to college all the time and asking what someone got on a test is normal, that's not okay. We need to prioritize who people are over where they are going or planning on going to school. Asking about someone's weekend or how their recent sports game went or what music they've been listening to is a lot less stressful than where they're spending the next four years.

This ban on constant college talk helps everybody: without it, we can relax a bit. Many of our home lives are dominated by persistent parents asking about deadlines and decisions, but we can change this discussion at school. We can alleviate some of that stress by just talking about other things.

Sure, it's nice to vent from time to time, we all do it. But does this actually help very much? More importantly, how does it affect the people around us? This culture of sharing stress (and it seems, competing to be the most stressed) makes school an even more tense battleground.

It seems like all that matters right now is college, so much that we're forgetting that people are more than just their future locations. And if college is all you talk about, that makes it your entire identity, which obviously causes even more stress.

People aren't going to remember you as "the kid that went to so and so," or "that one that was rejected from so and so." They'll remember what you did with your education and how you treated them and other people.

A juice cleanse for the soul



by Stephanie Kim

I've started to notice a trend taking hold. In addition to the revival of Air Force One sneakers and flare jeans, my opinion pieces might be a little more like rants about the misfortunes of my time at New Trier rather than hearty column writing.

So this piece could serve as its own form of "cleanse" from my streak of academics-induced angst of which our newspaper's Perspectives section happened to be on the receiving end.

And on the note of cleansing, this past spring break, I suspect I inadvertently kind of had one.

Juicing, a popular kind of bodily "cleansing" that's captured the attention of many an adult or teen quite recently, is acclaimed to detoxify, energize, and rejuvenate the body (there is debate around whether that's medically true, however).

I'd thought that I'd never embark on this juicing journey myself (despite the temptation of Peeled Juice Bar's array of smoothies the one time I could afford to visit), but I realized in the wee hours of the morning a couple of days ago that I have, in fact, juiced. Pretty thoroughly, at that.

Except instead of detoxifying my mind and body through ingesting liquid produce, the Small Details of

Life decided to compress itself into a form of juice for my soul. To my astonishment and now gratitude, my soul gave it a try.

And yes, that statement does ooze with cheesiness. It's essentially a glorified form of "it's the little things in life," a platitude that's been stamped onto one too many Hallmark cards.

After all, how could the little things be our central focus or recipient of appreciation when we're tied up with handling the big things? What college we're going to commit to, whether we're going to college, what we want to study or what work we want to pursue next year, the IHSA state championship for any number of varsity sports, financial stress—life couldn't stop filling itself with huge decisions, well-deserving of our anxiety, if it tried.

But I found that the trick to making the little things matter is that there is none. To realize the significance of the Small Details of Life happens in a snap of the fingers, as if it spontaneously combusted and consumed you whole—at least, it went that way for me. Out of the blue, the Small Details of Life juice creates itself. Out of the blue, you take it.

Over break, I felt extreme levels of happiness as a result of wholly minuscule interactions. The wheezing that punctuated my sister's laugh as she dropped a slice of beet on the floor. The sun peeking over the fence in the backyard. The wit hidden beneath my friend's sarcasm over text. Breathing, and hearing my dog sitting beside me breathing, and knowing we're both just here. Alive. Moving. Loving. Remembering the

lights of the city smile through the translucent plane window on a Delta flight.

It might even be inaccurate to call the Small Details of Life a juice, per se. It's more like a pair of 3D glasses, a jarring but pleasant filter through which to watch everything unfold that you don't always happen to wear.

I don't know if the happiness I felt was a souped-up version or an entirely distinct species of happiness, but whatever it was, it was ethereal. It makes you feel so whole, so packed with an unnamed joy, that you want to explode just so you can put yourself back together again.

A joy beyond receiving an A on an AP Calculus BC test (which I cannot quite attest to) or a driver's license (which I also cannot attest to); a joy that can wash out the big things, even if just for now.

Man, if pixie dust is real, someone dumped it into the Small Details of Life juice.

I guess the moral of the story is that we all could use a sip of this juice more often than we currently do. In fact, possibly even everyday. This happiness is so unique, so rare that it deserves to be commonplace.

So enjoy that next cup of coffee or the frosting on the Jewel-Osco cupcakes or the smile on your younger sibling's face in that split second you guys stop fighting, and love the moments for being moments. Moments that you can see, register, feel—over and over and over as long as you're here.

As Life is Good™ says, Life is Good.

Man, I just wanna go flex



by Ezra Wallach

Getting into an elite college can be really hard, but thankfully the process can be made easier by advice from college counselors along with hundreds of websites that give tips on how to do better on the ACT or how to write a good college essay.

Even so, there still seems to be a lack of resources that tell us what to do when we or our friends commit to that "dream" college.

But, I am here to solve that problem. The past couple of years, I have noticed a pattern to how certain people act during the college admissions process on social media, and I have constructed a few rules that I wrote out on paper, instead of letting them remain in their previously unwritten form. This will encourage more people to act according to societal norms, and hopefully one day it will lead to everyone flexing appropriately.

After all, not all flexes are created equal.

Rule #1: In order to do any social media college flex that isn't related to sports, you must identify as a female.

Rule #2: DON'T POST SOMETHING THAT SAYS YOU COMMITTED TO A COLLEGE ON INSTAGRAM FOR ACADEMICS.

Rule #3: If you did commit to a college for a sport though, you are now allowed to make an Instagram post telling everyone

where you committed, and read the 47,358 comments that you get congratulating you. But, posting on Instagram still might seem a little bit too much of a flex, so you might feel compelled to post about your committal on Twitter, which won't seem like a flex at all.

Rule #4: While posting something on Instagram that says you committed to a certain college not for a sport is completely against the rules, making a post on Facebook is completely fair game. Let me clarify: posting on Instagram can be considered "unacceptable behavior" by some, but posting on Facebook is just one of those things you do.

Rule #5: If one of your best friends just got into, let's say, Wisconsin, then you should probably post an Instagram story congratulating them on their acceptance. It is extremely important to let your followers know that 1. You have many "best friends," and 2. You have many "best friends" that are smart.

This is also a great opportunity to let your followers know how attractive you are. Find all the photos of you and said friend and pick out the three or four photos that you look the best in (don't worry, how your friend looks doesn't matter).

Then, you could be basic and just say congratulations and name the college they got into on one Instagram story, or you could arguably be even more basic and use up four different Instagram stories with different colored fonts and font colors to show off your artistic prowess!

After all, it is impossible to show your friends that you are happy for them without posting something on social media.

Joking aside, while these rules were very much exaggerated, it does seem as if sometimes people go unnecessarily out of their way to show off their acceptance or committal to a certain school. But, at times flexing can rather just be a side-effect to letting people know you got in somewhere or being happy for and/or proud of a friend.

The unwritten rules of this process at times attempt not to hurt the feelings of those who didn't get in or couldn't afford a certain school, but no matter what, that will always be inevitable. Even so, we can still make legitimate attempts to seem less obnoxious or over-the-top in the way we flex aside from these foolish differentiations on social media.

I'm not saying that people who post stuff are necessarily bad because these posts often come from a place of pride or happiness that is completely understandable. I'm saying though that certain flexes can be eradicated or altered based on what their eventual unavoidable impact on certain other students would look like. Sometimes flexes are truly unnecessary, and so instead we can choose to prioritize how they might make others feel rather than what they will do for us.

And so, instead of using this unwritten, but now written, rulebook, that I along with others worked to construct, maybe we should just ask ourselves these three questions before we do a college flex (or really any type of flex) in real life or on social media: 1. Does my flex have a real purpose? 2. How will my flex make other people feel? And 3. Can I still be happy or proud for myself and others without this flex at all?

Letter to the editors

From time to time, the New Trier News will publish guest opinions. These letters do not reflect the views of the New Trier News. To submit a letter for consideration, email us at ntnews@ntns.net.

On behalf of Erika's Lighthouse Club, we'd like to thank Danielle Kurensky for her courage and perspective about talking about mental health.

Our club works to de-stigmatize talking about depression and other mental health challenges and to promote good mental health in our school and community. Danielle's

willingness to share her experience is a big first step in talking about mental health at our school. Her explanation of her symptoms, along with the various supports available are what students need to understand, like she said, "are not alone."

- Erika's Lighthouse

