

## Editors Column



**Audrey Park**  
Grade 10  
Northwood High School

## Glorified Skincare Routines: Are They Worth it?



Product-dense skincare routines can contribute to more sensitive skin if adjusted often.

[Source: Author, Audrey Park]

There's nothing wrong with wanting your skin to look like the surface of a diamond, to expect to see your reflection when you stare at it closely. After all, the skincare industry has thrived on the basis of helping patrons gain these surprisingly achievable goals. But it is when you begin spending an

excessive amount of money to get unsatisfactory results that the expectation becomes murky.

In the past decade, skincare has not only become synonymous with getting supple or radiant skin, but it also encourages online communities to discuss methods to navigate the evolving industry. It's quite surprising how one practice united individuals interested in everything from beauty to self-care into one closely-knit internet section. Some may even associate the relationship between impressionable teenagers and skincare routines with budding seeds and sunlight. Sure, it's great to access a vast network of skincare-related resources, but when is it too much?

The answer is apparent to some teenagers with "sensitive" skin, but dermatology researchers do not even identify these pre-eminent issues with irritation-prone skin. In a Refinery29 article, Dr. Pamela Benito, a skincare spe-

cialist, addresses the common trend of overusing products in skincare routines documented on the internet by stating, "The skin can't handle all these ingredients at once and can get red and sensitized with an itchy rash effect." This statement conveys how some of the unsatisfactory results that skincare practitioners see may not be related to their products or their skin but to their body's reaction to involuntary user error. One common misconception that most teenagers get is that their skin sensitivity is completely natural. However, combined factors such as frequent skincare routine changes and unnecessary moisturization from product density condition the skin to respond negatively to long periods of time without hydration.

Furthermore, acknowledging that the skincare community's product-dense routines do more harm than good for some skin

types allows one to consider that it could also subtly encourage frequent product-use adjustments. A large part of the skincare community consists of product-sharing content, where influencers recommend additions to one's routine. While this may aid some skincare patrons who are beginning to use moisturizers or serums, it only worsens the skin quality of those who have been veterans of the practice, as not sticking to routines that produce satisfactory to great results can further disrupt the skin's reception of new or old oils.

On top of these issues regarding unnecessary use, using products that are solely concentrated on adult use can irritate younger practitioners while exacerbating the previous concerns. So, maybe it is better to leave some skin care practices in the dirt and settle for what's always provided light for your glass-like garden.

## Student Reporter

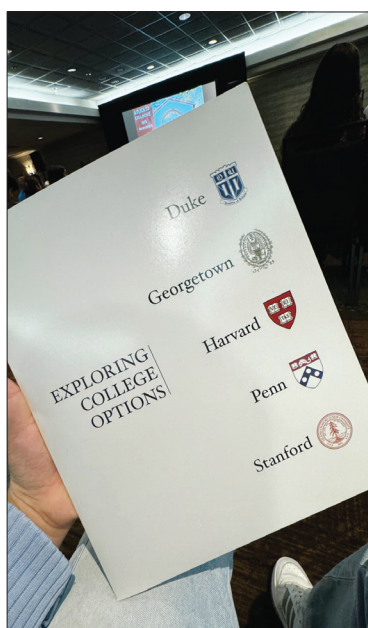


**Eunice Minji Choi**  
Grade 11  
North Hollywood High School

## Exploring Colleges: Duke, Georgetown, Harvard, Stanford, and UPenn

As high school seniors are committing to their colleges and futures, juniors are now starting their journeys. As a junior in high school, the summer to fall of this year will be the busiest time of my life. I have to start what will determine my future path- college applications. I've worked my entire life (literally) to get to this point and plan the best college application I can to get into a good college. Juniors are usually overwhelmed with the process, unfamiliar with the application process and worrying if they are "worthy" of being admitted. I feel the same way, and luckily, the colleges heard my cry because many invited me to their presentations about the application process and their options.

I was privileged to be invited to the Exploring College Options Program on May 9, 2024, held at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel located in Downtown Los Angeles. This event was held by top colleges: Duke University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, Stanford University, and the Uni-



The Exploring College Program's in-person event in Downtown Los Angeles was an amazing event that helped ease my mind about the college application process.

[Source: Author, Eunice Minji Choi]

versity of Pennsylvania. Admission officers from these schools presented their schools, campus life, financial aid, and facts that make each school unique.

Once I checked in, I received a

folder with a pamphlet from every school. UPenn's pamphlet was by far the most creative because it looked just like a newspaper! The pamphlets included pictures of the campuses, student testimonies, financial aid information, and fun facts about the college. The schools focused on financial aid quite often during the presentations. I was glad to find out that all 4 years of tuition, housing, food, and travel will be provided to those who need it. I also learned that these schools were "need-blind," which means that they do not take your financial situation into consideration during the admission process. And as everyone should know, affirmative action is banned, meaning race will not be considered during the process. All schools also talked about early action and early decision when it comes to applying for the schools.

After all the presentations and Q&A, I had the chance to talk to each admissions officer privately. My first conversation was with the

representative of Stanford University. Stanford has always been my dream school, so I had a lot of questions. We talked about test scores, extracurricular activities, and ways I can make my application stand out. The admissions officer answered every detailed question I had, and through this conversation, my worries shrunk. I then talked to Harvard's admissions officer and asked similar questions because I knew each school had a different approach to the application review process. Throughout the night, I talked to all admissions officers and received similar feedback and advice.

Overall, this event bettered my confidence regarding the application process. Before this, I worried about everything- my academics, essays, extracurriculars, etc. However, after talking to those who had read our applications, I learned that the application process is not as stressful and difficult as I thought it to be. Hopefully, this summer will be enough to prepare an amazing application!

## Student Reporter



**Hannelle Yang**  
Grade 10  
Campbell Hall

## Relieving Stress is a Walk in the Park

Holed up in your room at 2 AM, you spend a few nights cramming tests and AP exams. With the final weeks of school creeping up on students, life can be difficult to manage. Due to final exams significantly contributing to overall grades, pressure is high, and every decision counts. According to an article touching on the impacts of end-semester exams, Jacki Craft informs, "Despite the various sources of stress, data reveals that finals and midterms accounted for the top source of stress for 31% of U.S. students." With so much on students' plates, there seems to be no time to relax or go to the gym, limiting the options for a break. What could be done in times like these?

Well, if you have 15 minutes to spare, take a step outside and circle a few laps around the street. You can improve your mood, blood flow, and circulation just by walking a block or two, as walking has been proven beneficial to your

hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The HPA axis is the central nervous response system that monitors stress, meaning by positively influencing your HPA, you can calm your nerves. Even if it seems like a short walk around the neighborhood would do nothing, reconnecting with nature and practicing simple, consistent movement can help refresh your brain from the mounds of schoolwork. Yan, a busy high school student, admits that pacing around her backyard for a mere ten minutes has helped her "focus more on her work and makes her more motivated." She claims that by incorporating a little bit of movement into her daily routine, she has improved her performance in school: "Just a simple exercise like walking your dog and stuff, you know, around the streets and stuff really-uh, I don't know, it just makes me feel a lot better about the day- and myself, too."

With a healthy, balanced rou-



A 15-minute walk can do great things to help relieve stress during finals week.

[Source: Author, Hannelle Yang]

time, 15 minutes of walking can greatly boost your performance and create a fulfilling experience. Walking is an extremely easy and accessible way of relieving stress for many students who cannot spare much time, making it a perfect solution for the pressure from the final weeks of school. In fact, another student, Rosales, has used his daily walks as a study session for his classes: "Something

that really helped me on the test is I listen to AP Spanish podcasts on Spotify when I walk my dog, just being outside helps me focus more- especially on sunny days." Sometimes, complex situations have simple solutions, and all we have to do is find a new way to solve them. Despite the stress students may be going through, reducing stress could be as simple as a walk in the park.

Editors Column

## Are Energy Drinks And Caffeine Worth The Hype?



**Isleen Lee**  
Grade 10  
Harvard-Westlake School



My Starbucks runs often consist of me getting a medium-sized iced matcha latte, which keeps me alert and less tired! [Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

As students, one universal experience many can relate to is going to school with inadequate sleep. Whether it's because of last-minute studying for a test, catching up on missed homework, or simply getting home late, many high school students have likely gone to school having slept very few hours the previous night. It truly is the worst feeling, watching the min-

utes pass late at night when you're still at your desk, finishing whatever task, while feeling physically and mentally exhausted. Would this experience feel more durable if we weren't as tired? This is a question I ask myself frequently, as I, too, have, countless times, slept very little and gone to school. "I wish there were more hours in a day," or "Should I go to sleep and do this tomorrow?" are all thoughts I think of as I realize that I need to go another night and sacrifice my precious hours of sleep. However, because there cannot exist more than twenty-four hours in a day, and sometimes, it just so happens that numerous tests are on the same day, we must look outside the box for solutions. That is, energy drinks and caffeine.

At the start of this school year, I had never tried an energy drink. Fast forward to the present day, I have still not tried one. However, through my transition to my school's campus where the sophomores, juniors, and seniors

are, I realized that energy drinks and caffeine are a popular choice of drink, especially among juniors and seniors. Soon enough, I learned that many of my friends were consuming energy drinks to help them get through the day and compensate for their little amount of sleep. Energy drink brands such as Red Bull, Celsius, and Marquis are the ones that are most commonly drunk by students. Many at my school mention that energy drinks are "what keeps them going" on some days, meaning that drinking caffeinated drinks keeps them going through the school day. Despite the dangerous side effects to one's cardiovascular health after constant consumption of these drinks, many students heavily rely on these to prevent feeling excessively tired. In other cases, many students who do not drink energy drinks tend to consume coffee or matcha lattes from the Starbucks near our school. Because I struggle with headaches after consuming

significant amounts of caffeine, I found myself falling into the latter category of students. Matcha lattes with extra scoops of matcha powder have been a lifesaver for me on many occasions. On days where I have slept very little the previous night, buying one of these from Starbucks or making one from home has been extremely helpful in making me feel more awake and less sleepy.

Although there is no substitute as functional as sleep, and by no means is this article promoting excessive caffeine consumption, sometimes, drinking caffeinated beverages can significantly help one feel less tired and focus better throughout the day. Realistically, drinking caffeinated drinks is definitely beneficial if you want to feel more awake for a temporary period of time and live up to the hype in that aspect, but in my opinion, it shouldn't be continually relied on as a source of relief from physical exhaustion.

Student Reporter

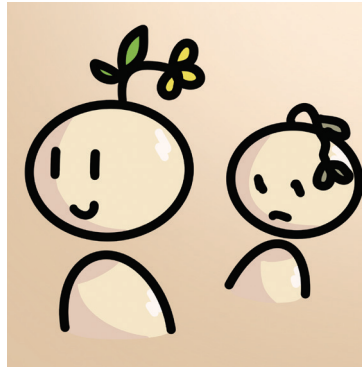
## How to Change Your Fixed Mindset to a Growth Mindset



**Chloe Je**  
Grade 8  
Sierra Vista Middle School

There is a large misconception in our society that people who are not "born creative" can never be creative, and people who are "born smart" will always be smart. However, this is as far as we can get from the truth. This way of thinking is called a fixed mindset. The opposite of this way of thought is called a growth mindset. However, what exactly is a fixed mindset, and how can you change it to a growth mindset?

A fixed mindset is where one believes that their intelligence and abilities are a fixed trait. People with this mindset often avoid challenges, give up easily, and blame others for their mistakes or failures. A growth mindset, on the other hand, is the belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed through hard work and dedication. People with a growth mindset are more resilient, persistent, and open to



Although creating a growth mindset may be hard, with effort and patience, it is completely possible. [Source: Author, Chloe Je]

learning. They are more likely to take on challenges, learn from their mistakes, and persist in the face of setbacks.

A fixed mindset is very easy to identify, but the difficult part is sometimes admitting that you yourself have one, too. People with a fixed mindset often fall down the rabbit hole in which they convince themselves that it is not their

fault they made a certain mistake or that they will always try harder next time. People who even actively try to foster a growth mindset may find themselves caught up in these thoughts from time to time. So, if this is so horrible for your motivation and mental health, what can you do to stop it?

You can start by identifying where your mindset is at and realize that it can change if you work towards it. It may be difficult at first, but you can nurture it by taking on challenges, getting out of your comfort zone, and trying new things, as well as challenging your negative thoughts. Another thing you can do is surround yourself with a positive environment. Be kind to yourself and make sure that the people you are around you are people who have your best interests at heart and make a positive impact on your life. However, even if you follow all of these tips,

you cannot achieve a true growth mindset without patience. This change will not happen overnight, and it will take practice and time. This is a habit you will have to create, and it will take dedication.

While it may seem like it takes a lot of effort to cultivate your mind, the outcomes are more than just rewarding. People with growth mindsets are able to gain new skill sets easier, thrive in challenges, and be successful in their school lives and in their careers.

So while you may have a tendency to gravitate towards a fixed mindset, the importance of weeding it out and replacing it with a growth mindset is extremely important. Just because you may have strengths in one field and weaknesses in others does not mean these abilities will never be yours. All it takes is a little risk-taking and a lot of patience and practice.

Student Reporter

## Embracing Mental Health Awareness Month at La Canada High School



**Claire Lee**  
Grade 10  
La Canada High School

Mental health is commonly defined as one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, manipulating nearly all aspects of our daily lives. To maintain a balance between mental health and one's overall well-being, it is crucial to practice self-care, pay close attention to one's needs, and seek necessary support. Raising awareness of and educating about common mental health concerns are crucial to promoting an environment of welfare and providing individuals with the resources and aid they need.

At La Canada High School, LCHS, Mental Health Awareness Month is valued greatly. Throughout May, institutions within our school, like Peer Support and the Spartan Wellness Center, cooperate to celebrate the well-being of everyone on campus and offer entertaining ways and activities to foster healthy habits. In one of

the activities, students are encouraged to write what they could do to improve their mental health on post-it notes and stick them to one large communal wall, allowing them to come together and share. The vibrant color green, a symbol for Mental Health Awareness Month (MHAM), covers the school campus, serving as a clear reminder of our relentless commitment to fostering a supportive environment. This public form of recreation offers a safe space for people to be truthful and feel welcomed, cultivating a common identity. These activities, however, aren't merely limited to May; they occur throughout the school year, showing that this supportive environment is always present.

The Peer Support program, in the form of a class, offers extensive training to students who are willing to take up a "helping role" and empathize with peers on campus,

actively listening to their concerns and communicating through their experiences. A member of Peer Support states that the program "allows students to actively engage in promoting a more positive environment for LCHS students."

The Wellness Center is a unique institution at LCHS; it features individual rooms for counseling and comfortable seating where students can take a break from any form of stress, academic or personal. Here, they have access to resources, counseling sessions, or even a short place to rest in between classes. The comforting and pleasant ambiance of this building provides a place of solace amidst the chaos of students' daily lives.

Mental Health Awareness Month is an effort that requires the collective support of everyone in hopes of promoting an optimistic community within our school. The aim of all



Under the large mental well-being poster are responses from students, offering their insight on personal self-care methods. [Source: Author, Claire Lee]

of these initiatives, particularly during May, is to endorse an inclusive and attentive school community where everyone has the opportunity to gain support or give others the support they need. Our shared efforts can help mold LCHS into a more harmonious and welcoming environment.