**The Case Against Cutting Class**

**It’s a waste of money, and it’s bad for your mental health.**

[68 Comments](https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-case-against-cutting-class-1534374214?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=5#comments_sector)

By Jennifer L. Taitz

In late August I wonder how often people skip pricey, nonrefundable experiences that they’ve planned for years. Then I fantasize about buying college students old-fashioned alarm clocks.

Depression and anxiety are prevalent on campus, and high rates of absenteeism aren’t helping. A Harvard study noted attendance dropped from 79% at the beginning of the year to 43% at semester’s end. At Harvard, where tuition and housing costs some $70,000 a year, each missed class amounts to several hundred dollars.

As a psychologist, my student patients tell me skipping class is practical—attendance isn’t mandatory and lectures are accessible online. The mindset is that there’s little benefit to sitting in a room with peers while engaging with prospective mentors. Yet these young adults never contemplated enrolling in more affordable online schools.

Cutting class also entails health risks. Getting up for lectures each day will help you cultivate good sleep habits, since one way to treat or prevent insomnia is to maintain a set wake time. If you stow your smartphone and mindfully participate, not only will you actually learn, but you may find yourself less stressed than when passively scrolling through social media or frenetically texting. Your British literature discussion may prove a nice distraction from ruminating about your relationships. And sitting in a room full of people you have something in common with is an opportunity to create meaningful connections and feel less alone.

If you assume sticking to your schedule feels forced—especially if you’re tired, hung over or behind on assignments—go anyway! Behavioral activation, or sticking to a meaningful plan independent of your mood, is as effective in treating depression as medication. Even when you don’t feel captivated by your required courses, arriving with your eyes up will help you live better and prevent the panic and sadness that are bound to torment you if you fall behind or isolate. After you commit to going to class, if your mind comes up with an excuse not to go, see that as mental spam, not a sensible plan.

Even if your college years are behind you, the same advice applies if you have a hard time getting going with your commitments. And if you need help with any of the above, find a therapist to help. But first, make a commitment to embark on your adult life as someone who shows up.

*Ms. Taitz is a clinical psychologist and author of “How to Be Single and Happy” and “End Emotional Eating.”*

Appeared in the August 16, 2018, print edition of the Wall Street Journal.