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Happy first day of the semester! You're excited to start off 2013, right? New textbooks, new classes, work, homework, meetings, no sleep, while still trying to balance a social life? Yeah, it sounds daunting to me too.

There are many ways to stay healthy and happy throughout the semester, but over my past seven semesters at ISU, I have found there are three things that usually keep me sane.

When times get tough, stop going

At some point in the semester, you will get busy, stressed and have a longer to-do list than it took to unpack this weekend. When this happens, sleep can be put on the back burner in an effort to get everything done. All of a sudden it's 3 a.m., you're hyped up on caffeine and your eyes are crossing. And there's still work to do.

I challenge you to do something different: sleep. Sometimes it's the hardest thing to do as a college student, but the best possible remedy. When I go to bed before midnight, even with a paper to write and a test to study for, I wake up feeling recharged and optimistic that everything can and will get done, as long as I work hard during the daylight.

Eight hours of sleep seems like an impossible number, I know, but hey, it might make that 8 a.m. seem a little less awful.

One sandwich is better than two energy drinks

With the new year, many people (myself included) are attempting to shed a few pounds and start making better food choices. But it's not that easy.

When you're stressed or tired, quick and unhealthy food can be easy. Energy drinks are also a

go-to when staying up late to work on homework. It happens, even though everyone knows that processed sugar and fried food is bad for you and should be limited. (But why does it have to taste so good?)

Instead, treat yourself to good, wholesome food when you're busy. Don't feel guilty about a burger, tacos or pizza — they have protein and fuel to power you through hard days. Having a substantial meal is better than eating a salad now and an inevitable bag of chips later.

Most of the things you worry about never happen

I am the world's biggest offender of worrying. I worry in the morning when I'm brushing my teeth, when I'm sitting in class and especially when I'm trying to fall asleep.

We all do it, at some point, and why? Sure, sometimes there are good times to worry. It promotes action to solve problems. But when we get caught up in what-ifs and worst-case scenarios, worrying is a problem. It's exhausting.

Throughout my semesters, I've had many worries, but in moments of clarity, I realize worrying about what-ifs will never change anything, and all of the worst-case scenarios I concoct in my head? They just aren't going to happen.

This semester, when you're worried up to your eyeballs, take a step back, and try to realize that you can probably not change what you're worried about. It is not in your control, and sometimes that can be a beautiful, liberating thing.

When you're worried about something you can change though, then realize you have the power and ability to do so.

From the day we arrive at college, we are trained to worry about getting a job. But what I firmly believe is that anyone who works hard enough and wants it badly enough can get a job. Take that worry and let it empower you to keep improving yourself.

So there's my three-step game plan for the semester. Sleep, eat good food and stop worrying. Easy right? Let's hope.

Questions or comments regarding August's column can be sent to: dv_alcasse@exchange.ilstu.edu.