Controlling Inertia

By Caleb Barnet, M.S.

Whether you are new student jumping into the 2017 Spring semester or an experienced veteran with one or more semesters under your belt, welcome home Lions! For those of you who return, I hope you were able to enjoy a reprieve from deadlines, savor home cooked meals, and delight yourself in uninterrupted sleep away from roommates and alarm clocks.

Nevertheless, let’s be honest and acknowledge that it is possible that some college life followed you home over the break. Did you catch yourself calling family members “Dr. ___” or “professor ___”? Did you notice yourself cringe when nearing a book? Was it difficult to rid yourself of your night-owl sleep schedule, pace yourself and not inhale your food, or forget that showering at home doesn’t require flip-flops?

Some habits can be difficult to shake. It is almost as if once we develop a routine, and follow-it, inertia sets in. Isaac Newton’s first law of motion stated that objects at rest stay at rest and that an object in motion retains its course unless acted upon by an external force.

You, dear Lions, are about to embark upon a new semester. Spring 2017 is loaded with potential. As you begin to transition into college life, whether this is your first or final semester, you are going to face “inertia”. You might find that you want to continue your wintry-break sleep schedule and diet. You might also find that despite your best efforts, your diet and sleep schedule resist any changes you try to implement.

If this happens, do not fret. You are capable of making the transition. You got this! You are simply fighting your body’s inertia or tendency to want to continue the relaxed pace of life you enjoyed over the break.

The key to helping yourself make the transition to TAMUC begins with simply noticing your inertia. Notice and remind yourself how great it was to sleep, to eat, and to breathe freely over the break. Now remind yourself that you can continue to enjoy these things (and even have more of them than ever before) if you plan accordingly.

As 2017 begins, encourage yourself to establish a routine. Obviously academic success will require planning ahead for studying, homework, and assignments but it also requires allotting time for sleeping, eating, exercising, and fun. There is also no need to make 2017 an unsocial year. Add social-life to your routine. The key is to add everything you want to your routine, but to do so in a balanced way.

Be forewarned: Spring 2017 will also include stress and heartache; perhaps both aplenty. The key to a happy 2017 is to establish the routine that you want and to stick to it. I have reason to believe that if you develop a balanced 2017 routine (and you stick to it) you will find that you can control your own inertia as opposed to it controlling you.

For extra tips, ideas, resources, or assistance setting up your healthy routine, fighting inertia, managing stress, increasing sleep hygiene, or increasing self-compassion come see us at the Counseling Center, 204 Halladay Student Services, 903-886-5145.