

# **Anxiety in Female College Students: Overcoming the Stigma**

Julia Podest

# Background Research

- Mental health is a very serious issue in college students and is a growing concern on many campuses, including the University of Delaware. Recent studies in the New York Times have concluded that college students today are exponentially more anxious than college students twenty-five years ago, especially females. Research shows that female college students experience a heightened sense of anxiety and struggle with obstacles such as body issues, self-esteem, and so much more. College is a time for new experiences and a time for individuals to discover themselves. However, with college comes a rigorous course load, new people, a new environment and so much more. All of these abrupt changes can leave many individuals feeling extremely lost or anxious, something that is not always easy to talk about. However, the greatest challenge by far when facing mental health in women, specifically anxiety, is the societal stigma that comes along with it. For women, taking the first step towards getting help can be particularly challenging due to certain societal pressures and expectations.

# Project Idea

- For my summer fellows project, I did research on the topic anxiety in female college students to raise awareness about this serious issue. My goal is to normalize the discussion of anxiety in female college students while spreading awareness and letting women who are struggling know that they are not alone. Anxiety is a reality, not a choice, and my project encourages women to empower other women. I want to teach and show people that just because this isn't visible or tangible doesn't mean it's not real and that this disease does not make a woman weak. The topic of mental health is still seen as a very taboo subject and I am trying to change that.
- My project is a series of posters and other printed matter that act as platforms to help end the stigma around mental health.

# Research

- I have discovered that a lot of the clubs at the University of Delaware regarding mental health do things such as in person meetings, fundraisers, 5k runs, events on the green such as barbecues, etc. After researching the organizations and resources that UD has to offer, I have found many of them to be very similar to one another with similar deliverables or events.
- For my project, I wanted to raise awareness about anxiety in female college students while also inspiring women everyday and reminding them that they are not alone. My goal was to give women an outlet for their anxiety and a community of other women who understand exactly what they are going through.

# Research

- It can be hard for women to admit they are struggling and come out in the open and admit what is hurting them internally. For example, not everyone is comfortable with attending a barbeque in the middle of campus for something so serious such as anxiety. That being said, I also want to normalize this topic and chip away at the stigma regarding anxiety. However, I strongly believe that the way to do that is through giving these women information and resources in a way they are comfortable with. This is why I created reminders and ways to help any women who are struggling in a more discrete way. My printed posters and artwork that would be hypothetically hung around campus will allow women who are too afraid to ask for help know that it is okay to not be okay, while also educating everyone on this topic.

# Research

- In addition to my research on the topic of anxiety in female college students as a whole, as well my research on the University of Delaware's resources on mental health, I also conducted interviews with over a dozen different women that fit the demographic. I did these interviews in person, on zoom, and through email, interviewing women from several different backgrounds, hometowns, and schools, all ranging from freshman year of college to senior year. These interviews were extremely beneficial to my project, as they taught me many things and gave me a lot of insight. I also pulled several quotes from these interviews for text in my posters.

# Interview Questions

## Questions:

1. How do you personally deal with your anxiety? What are some resources or activities that make you feel better when you are feeling anxious?
2. Have you ever looked into getting professional help regarding your anxiety, either through the University of Delaware (if applicable) or from an outside source?
3. Have you ever looked into the University of Delaware's (if applicable) resources regarding anxiety? If so, do you feel as if the University of Delaware has useful resources?
4. What is the youngest age or memory you have when you remember feeling anxious?
5. Would you say that you have always felt anxious or struggled with anxiety? Or rather is this something you developed at some point in your life?
6. What are some events or occurrences that make you feel the most anxious?
7. Do you personally feel as if your anxiety worsened during your college years? Do you think that being away from home plays a factor in this?
8. Do you have problems concentrating when you are feeling anxious or stressed?
9. Are you involved with any clubs or organizations on your campus, and if so which ones? Are you involved in any of the mental health organizations?
10. Would you be interested in getting involved with an anxiety related organization? Why or why not?
11. Do you personally feel comfortable talking about your anxiety?
12. Do you feel as if female college students as a whole feel comfortable talking about their anxiety? Why or why not?
13. Do you feel as if a societal stigma comes along with the topic of anxiety?
14. Do you talk to your friends and family about your anxiety? Would you say the discussion of anxiety is a normal topic?
15. Do you have different ways to deal with your anxiety at home vs. at school?

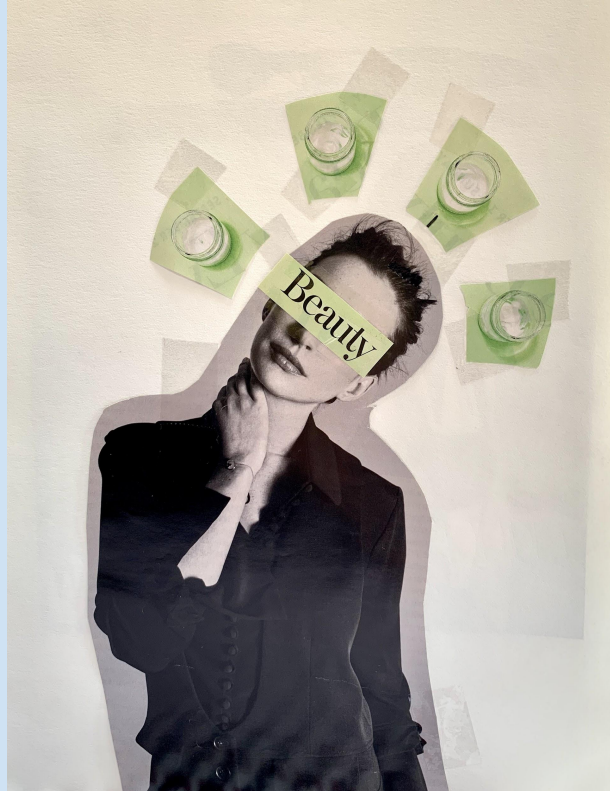
# Concepts

- I started collaging images found in magazines that exemplified my four topics of concentration/concepts:
  - **Relationships between Women**
    - The idea of women empowering and supporting other women
    - The importance of talking about each other's feelings and having important conversations
  - **Freedom of Choice/Power**
    - Female strength
  - **Self Confidence**
    - The idea that women are entitled to their own feelings, struggles, emotions, and decisions
  - **Gender Roles**
    - Dealing with stereotypes

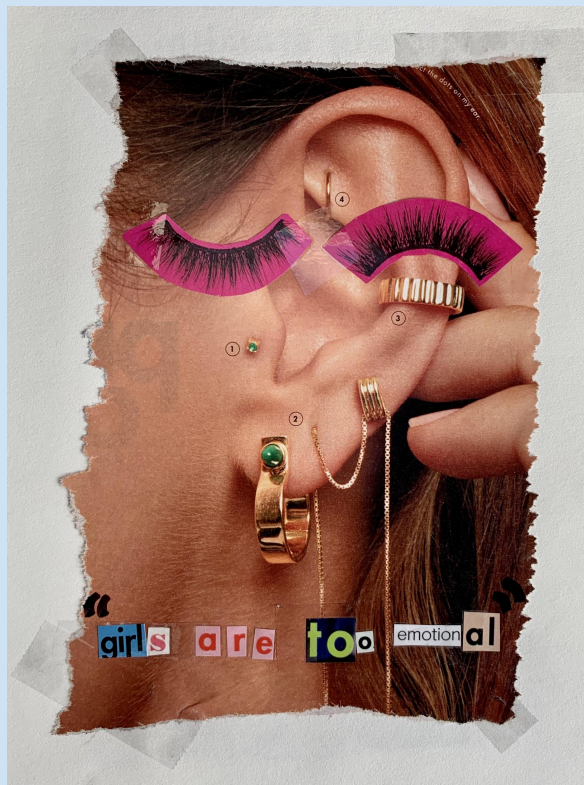
## Experimentation and Process Work

- After completing my research, I started to experiment with different mediums. I knew that I wanted my end goal to be printed media such as reminders, artwork, and posters that would be hypothetically hung up around campus.
- I chose to work with mixed mediums, with collage as my foundation. I formed these collages from magazines and newspapers, drawing directly on them by hand on paper. Then, I brought them onto Photoshop and Procreate and worked digitally.
- This project is a work in process and I plan to work on it throughout the Fall semester.

## Early Experimentation



# Early Experimentation



# Early Experimentation



# Early Experimentation



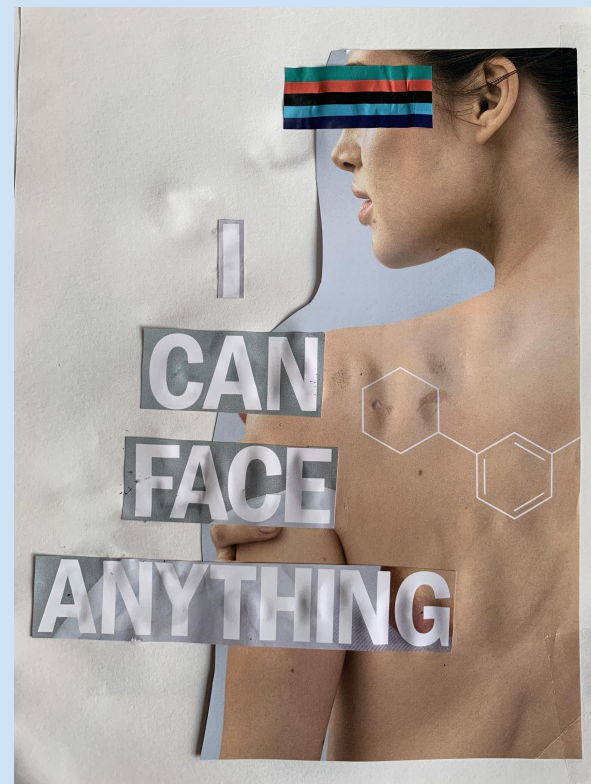
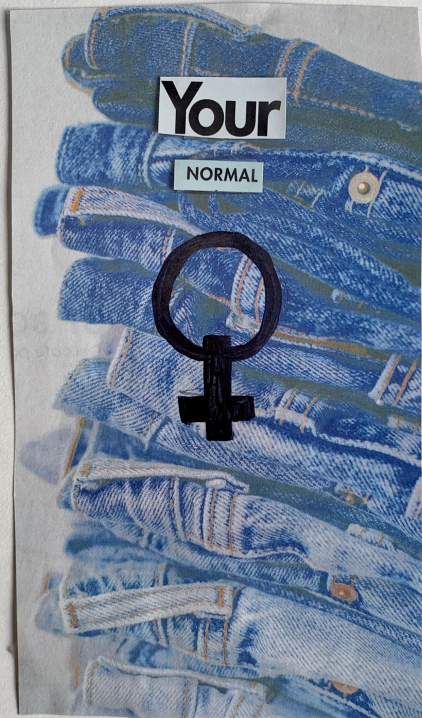
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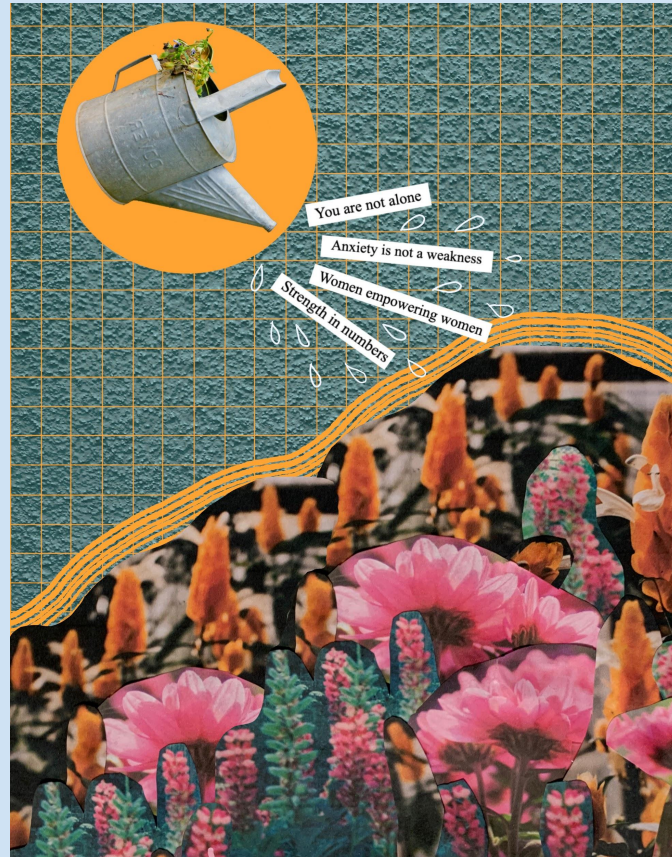
## Early Experimentation



# Relationships Between Women



# Relationships Between Women



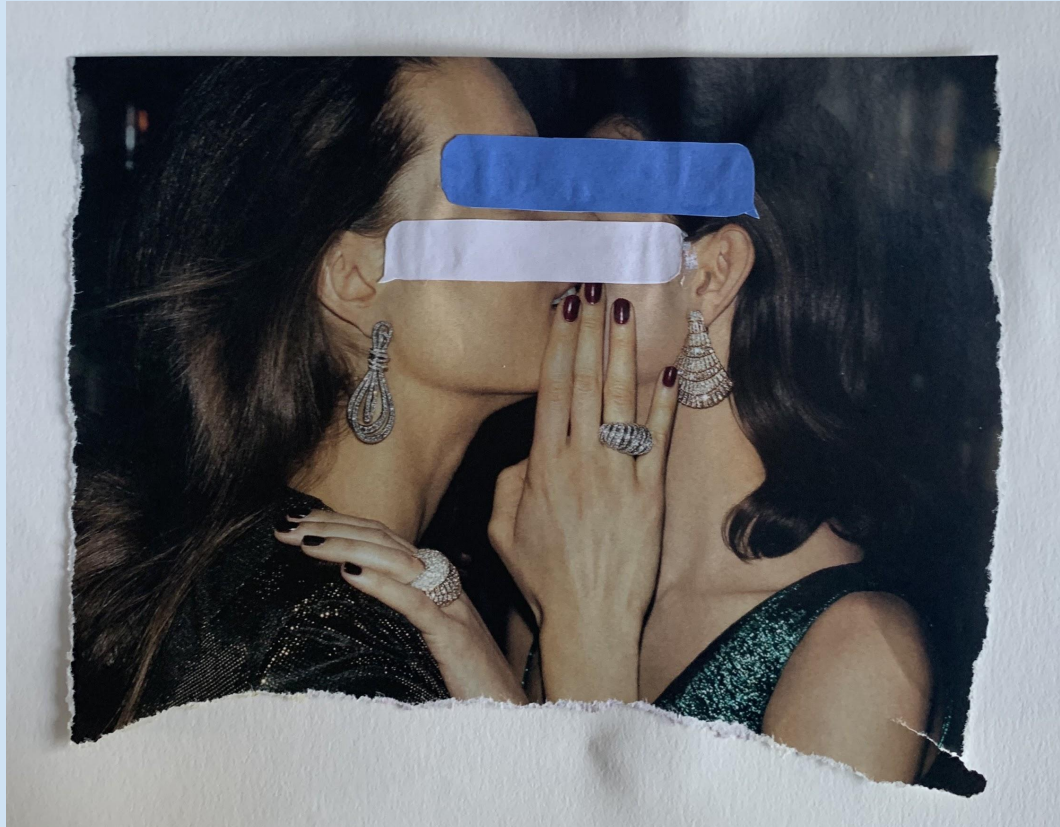
# Relationships Between Women



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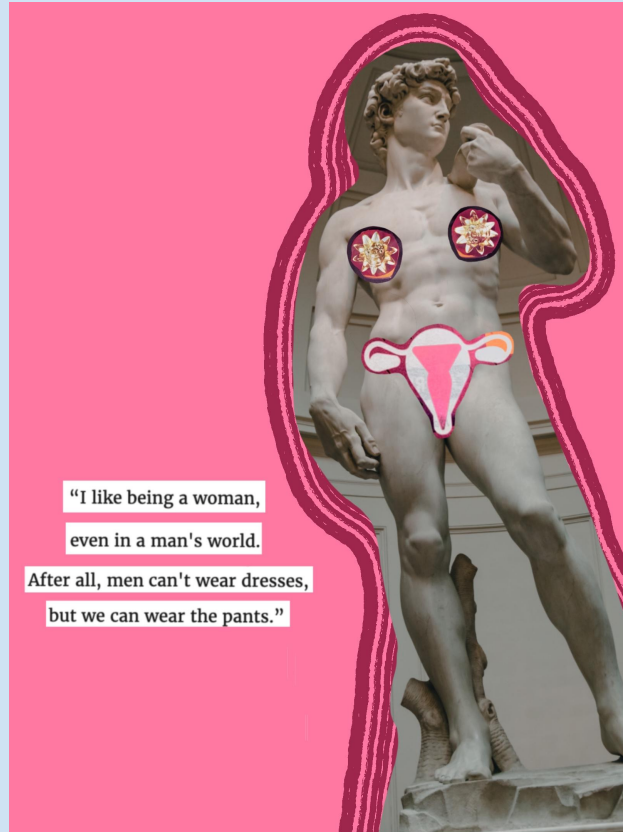
# Relationships Between Women



# Freedom of Choice/Power



# Freedom of Choice/Power



"I like being a woman,  
even in a man's world.

After all, men can't wear dresses,  
but we can wear the pants."

# Freedom of Choice/Power

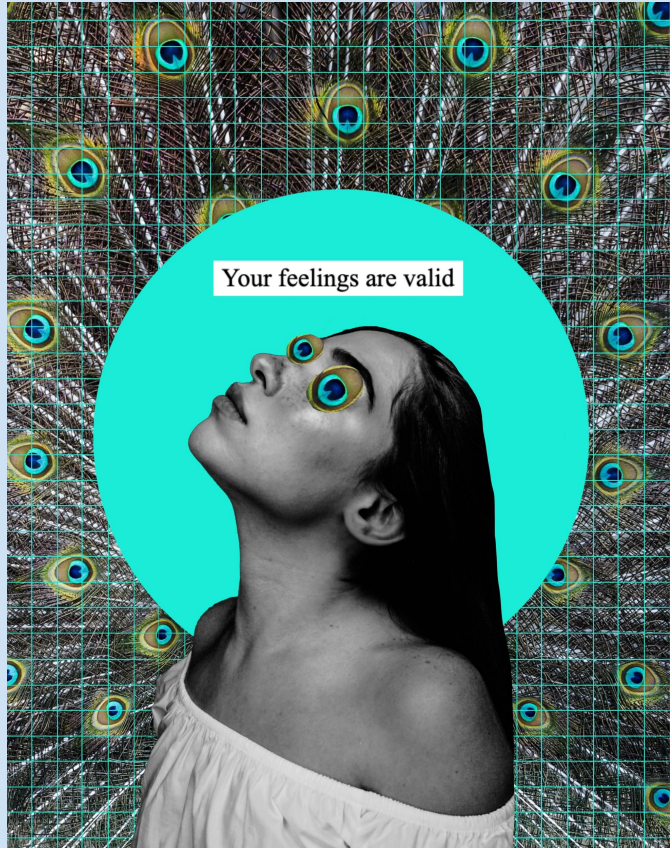


Women suffering

from anxiety do not

get enough credit.

# Self Confidence



# Self Confidence

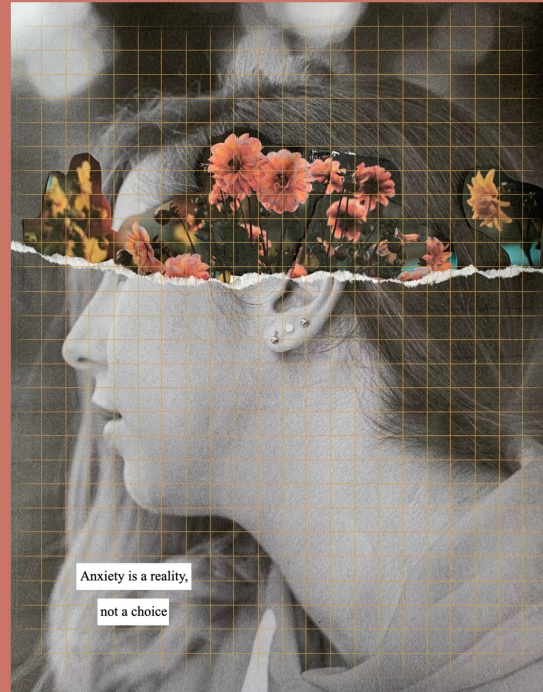


# Self Confidence



*"There's so much  
to love: her  
bright mind, her  
adventurous spirit.  
And, of course, her  
affinity for  
wearing sensible  
trousers on the job."*

# Self Confidence



Anxiety is a reality,  
not a choice

# Gender Roles



# Gender Roles

