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**“Wall of Rejection” helps high school seniors cope with college admissions stress**

By USA TODAY, adapted by Newsela staff

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At Wayland High School, in Wayland, Massachusetts, seniors are wearing rejection like a badge of honor.

As a cathartic tradition during college application season, students are posting rejection letters from colleges and universities the likes of Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth and Vanderbilt for all to see. Dubbed the "Wall of Rejection," the letters are plastered outside the school's media center.

Sarah Liszewski said adding her own letter — from Middlebury College in Vermont — to the wall helped her process the disappointment and move on, saying it bonds the class.

"It just sucks to be rejected. Being able to put it up there with everyone else — it feels like you're not alone and more at peace with it," she said.

The first letter was taped to the wall in late November and the collection has been growing ever since. Many of the short, generic letters have a similar ring.

"Unfortunately, the Admissions Committee has determined that your application for admission to Worcester Polytechnic Institute was not approved. We are sorry to report this disappointing news," wrote Executive Director of Admissions Jennifer A. Cluett in one.

The rejected student scribbled back his own commentary: "Did I get the shortest letter?"

Whenever a new one joins the wall, Assistant Principal Laura Cole responds with a supportive, yet colorful, note. "Cornell doesn't deserve your greatness! We're lucky to have you, keep on being a standout!" reads one of her notes.

**A Healthy Way to Cope With Rejection**

One anonymous student, turned away from Simmons University, blacked out their name with a marker. With a rainbow-shaped note, Cole praised the student, saying, "I know you are brave and so much more than this letter."

Cole said the idea initially made her wince, especially as it was first called the "Wall of Shame," but after a renaming, she's since come around and says it's a healthy way for teens to cope with rejection.

"When you're young, you think no one else has experienced rejection — it's such a lonely thing ... I realized it means something to them," said Cole, who was a school counselor at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School from 2011 to 2019 before coming to Wayland.

Senior Halley Markarian, 17, said some use the wall as a way of announcing their sad news without having to have awkward conversations with friends. And seeing peers also facing rejection helps zap some of the anxiety out of navigating the college admissions process, she said.

"Wayland, obviously, the social pressure here is very high. It normalizes it a little bit," said Halley.

When students commit to attend a certain university, they can celebrate by private messaging an Instagram account that will then post their name, senior photo, school and other information.

"It brings the whole senior class together a little bit," said Halley.

**Questions:**

* **What do you think about this method of dealing with rejection? Explain your answer.**
* **What does a “healthy way to cope with rejection” look like?**
* **Is there anything to be learned from rejection / failure? Explain your answer.**
* **Is this a mental health topic we should care about? Explain your answer**.