

Republican Perspective

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The Cry Closet

By now you have probably read of the most recent incarnation of “safe spaces” on campus. At the University of Utah a “cry closet” has been established to accommodate stressed-out students who are overwhelmed by the tremendous pressures of college.

The cry closet is located in the J. Willard Marriott Library. It was a product of a class project completed by Nemo Miller and two of her classmates.

The idea is that students distressed by the pressures of final exams could go into the closet where they would find a darkened environment, plush floor, fabric walls, soft materials, stuffed animals, and other toys. There the distraught could have a good cry and emerge stress-free.

The cry closet was endorsed by the University. Spokesperson Jana Cunningham said the cry closet was a place to “Just let it all out. Let yourself just get away from your studies....”

Some students were enthusiastic about the cry closet: Student Jayde said “I think one of these should be everywhere all the time.” Others took a different view, such as: “Way to prepare students for the real world. Wonder how many prospective employers have cry closets?” A Utah ex-Congressman called it “pathetic.”

So there were conflicting opinions of the cry closet, the purpose of which was to provide a space for students who were feeling overwhelmed with the stress of finals.

Cry closet creator Nemo Miller explained her reason for creating the cry closet in this enlightening statement: “I am interested in humanity and the inherent complexities of the human condition. In my work, I reflect on my experiences and explore what it means to be human. One aspect of humanity that I am currently exploring is connections and missed connections through communication. It’s been interesting to watch the response to this piece about human emotions, and I’m proud to see the power of art in action.” Got all that?

The University of Utah has taken down its cry closet with the May 2 end of finals. However, it is likely this silly concept will not slink away in ignominy but will metastasize and blossom on other American college campuses.

Let’s think for a moment about other college-age Americans and the stresses they faced. Some of those in our parents’ generation came of-age on Omaha Beach and Iwo Jima. Were there safe spaces and cry closets?

In their teens, our own contemporaries fought at Inchon and in Viet Nam. No cry closets on either of those campuses.

More recently American youngsters were tasked with taking Fallujah (twice) and dispatching Osama bin Laden to his Paradise. No cry closets along those trails either.

Still today, college-age Americans go through U.S. Navy SEAL training, USMC recruit training at Parris Island, and U.S. Army Ranger training. Again, no safe spaces or cry closets.

Not to say that nowadays most teens join the military, let alone its elite units. Few do. But even in the civilian world there are likely not many employers who supply time-out spaces for employees who think they are stressed and need to cuddle a teddy bear.

Looking back on it, college was pretty stress-free compared with later life. More-or-less-equal parts studying and partying. Encouraging college

students to believe they are under great stress is a disservice. Particularly leading them to believe that relieving their stress is a legitimate function of the university---even its duty.

This would be funny except for the fact that it sabotages the already slim chance that what nowadays passes for a liberal arts college education will prepare a student for the world that awaits.