Am I a dork for not being a party animal? [1]

Dear Alice,

I know I just arrived at college, but already I feel like such a dork! Unlike everyone else I've met, I like to go to bed before 3 A.M. I like eight hours of sleep. I don't drink or smoke and sometimes I like to stay in the dorm in the evenings so I can just relax. At home I worked hard, but was never one of the overachievers who studied every waking moment and went to bed at 8 P.M. every night. Why, suddenly, do I feel like one? And how do I meet other people who can accept me for not being a party animal?

Answer

Dear Reader,

It's true, many college students stay up deep into the night studying, gabbing with new friends, ordering take-out, and writing papers. Some know that they are naturally night owls? they are most productive in the wee hours of the night? so they choose late-day classes and sleep in when possible. Others find that especially around midterms and finals, the volume of work combined with their other activities make it virtually impossible to finish everything. Attempting desperately to do just that, they ignore their bodies' "I'm tired!" messages, getting little to no sleep. Still other students, however, are just like you. If they had their way, they'd call it a night before the difficulty concentrating and midnight munchies set in.

Many students find adjusting to the college sleeping and socializing schedule difficult. It's likely that if you talk with others, you'll find plenty of people who wish they could have more quiet time to themselves. Are you living with a roommate? If you are, one strategy is to talk with him or her to find out which of your habits are similar, and which will require compromise. For example, maybe s/he wants to go to sleep earlier, and would love to agree on a reasonable time. Or, maybe you'll have to ask that s/he find another place to study or socialize (a friend's room, the 24-hour reading room, the dorm lounge) on a few nights each week, so that you can rest. You could offer to visit with your friends on other nights, so that each of you has an equal amount of peace and quiet.

If you live in a residence hall, your RA (resident advisor) is also a good person to talk with about your concerns. As an upperclass student, s/he can probably suggest where to meet other people with your interests and validate your desire for a relaxing, substance-free social environment. Most residence halls develop "quiet hours"? designated times when loud music
and vivacious conversation must be toned down in order for floormates to study or sleep. If your floor doesn't have these, talk with your RA and floormates to pick some reasonable times.

When it comes time to find your next residence, look for roommates and suitemates who share your habits and style. You can also find out if there are quiet halls or substance-free housing options available. In the meantime, search out people who you find interesting and with whom you share goals. If there are people you like, but whose schedules usually leave you exhausted, suggest some alternative activities once in a while. Invite them over for a rented movie and take-out, plan a picnic brunch at a scenic spot, go ice skating, or throw a dinner party. Often, people get stuck in a social life rut, simply because they are creatures of habit or don't want to take the flack if their new idea flops. You can also meet people through your college’s community service group, film society, religious chapters, student government, and other student activity groups. There are sure to be people who, like you, are conscientious about their personal wellness and study habits, but like to have fun, too.

Alice!
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