

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,

While it's true that some college students stay up deep into the night studying ^[2], gabbing with friends, ordering take-out, and writing papers, this isn't the case for everyone. Some folks know they're naturally night owls ? they're most productive in the wee hours of the night ? so they choose late-day classes and sleep in when possible. Others choose to ignore their bodies' "I'm tired!" messages and stay up late to study and socialize, therefore getting less sleep than they really need. And finally, other students are just like you. If they have their way, they like to call it a night *before* the difficulty concentrating sets in. You're in luck, because there are several ways for you to connect with folks like yourself!

Adjusting to a sleeping and socializing while in college may be a bit of a challenge. If you talk with others, you'll likely find plenty of people who wish they could have more quiet time to themselves. Are you living with a roommate? If you are, and they are keeping you up late into the night, one strategy is to talk with them to find out which of your habits are similar and which could require compromise. For example, maybe they *want* to go to sleep earlier and would love to agree on a reasonable time. Or, maybe you'll have to ask that they find another place to study or socialize (a friend's place, a 24-hour reading room, the residence hall lounge) on a few nights each week so that you can rest. You could offer to visit with your friends on other nights, so each of you has an equal amount of alone time.

If you live in a residence hall, your resident advisor (RA) could also be a helpful person to talk with about your concerns. As someone who is likely more familiar with campus life and resources, they can probably suggest where to meet other people with your interests and validate your desire for a relaxing, substance-free social environment. Furthermore, 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 determine some reasonable times. When it comes time to find your next residence, look for roommates and suitemates who share your habits and style. You might also find out if there are quiet halls or substance-free housing options available.

In the meantime, try to search for folks who share similar interests and with whom you share goals. If there are people you like but whose schedules usually leave you exhausted, you might suggest some alternative activities once in a while. You could invite them over to watch a movie and grab 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. You might also try meeting people through your university's student groups. You could check out community service groups, a film society, religious chapters, student government, or other activities you have an interest in as well. 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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