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Demanding boyfriend, school, and balancing it all ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I am a first-year student and I can't take it anymore. I study so much with no avail. My boyfriend doesn't understand. He expects me to make love with him every weekend. He lives in Brooklyn and so I go home on weekends. My friends think that I should stay with him and I really do love him. I wouldn't mind having sex except I think my grades are suffering. I got an "88" on my Physics midterm which is curved to a grade of a "A-". I am getting an "A" in calculus, A- in ArtHum. I also got a B+ in Chem and an A+ in Chem Lab. I am so disappointed. I really need to do well in school. I don't know what to do. I am totally depressed.

Yours truly,

Worried Sex NoMore

Answer

Dear Worried Sex NoMore,

First, pause and take a few deep breaths. Take comfort in knowing that many students have been and are currently facing a similar predicament as you. You are certainly not alone. The good news is that there are many resources available to you as a college student to help you address your stress. Now, onto your question: While setting high expectations for your first year in college is understandable, aiming for straight A's is a lot of pressure. Striving for perfection can leave you feeling disappointed, even when your grades are excellent — and it sounds like yours are really great! With that said, though, reflecting on your current study strategies and having an honest conversation with your boyfriend may help you find a balance between your academic goals and a healthy social life while at school.

Adjusting to college life can be pretty stressful and taking on the demands of a rigorous and new academic schedule can be a challenge. It sounds like you're a pretty motivated pupil and you mention that you study so much. What kind of study habits do you have? Are you mostly studying alone or with friends? Do you feel like you spend your time studying effectively and efficiently or are you having difficulty concentrating? Do you ask your professors or teaching assistant's questions? You might want to consider asking for direction to make sure you're focusing your

study time on the most relevant material. To that end, consider taking advantage of office hours, review sessions, and other resources available to you — don't be afraid to ask for help!

While getting good grades sounds like your number one priority right now, finding a balance between schoolwork and your social life will help you get the most out of your time at school (and hopefully help you feel less stressed). However, finding that balance may take some time. Having a conversation with your boyfriend might be a good place to start. Have you discussed your priorities with him? Does he know how much you worry about your grades? Do you feel supported by him as you pursue your academic endeavors? How would you like him to show his support? Thinking about these questions may help you share your wants and needs with your boyfriend.

To that end, it might be worth reconsidering your trips home every weekend and asking your boyfriend about a different visiting schedule. There are a variety of alternative options that might work — such as seeing each other on alternate weeks, having him visit you at your residence hall, seeing each other twice a month instead of every weekend, seeing each other for one night and day each weekend, etc. This could also be a great opportunity to talk with your boyfriend about your feelings towards sex and its role in your relationship at this time. Communication about sex, priorities, and other issues like these can help you and your beau maintain a healthy relationship.

Finding a happy medium between school and relationships isn't always easy — but working towards one is a worthy cause. However, in the midst of that pursuit, it's crucial to find time for you as well. Sometimes, talking with someone can help remind you to re-focus on yourself. This someone could be a trusted friend, a family member, or you might speak with a mental health professional; any of these folks might be able to help you troubleshoot your situation even further.

Best of luck to you!

Alice!

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