Unhappy first year [1]

Dear Alice,

It's past Thanksgiving vacation and I am still not happy my first year at college. I don't feel like I have a solid routine and yet I feel like I'm in a rut. I have a few friends but they're not really people I want to spend my next four years with and I feel like the cliques have already been decided and I have trouble running up to people and introducing myself anyway. I'm bored all of the time and I sleep an ungodly amount of my life away, and all the literature says that I should be adjusted and having a swingin' time by now. And I'm not. I just want to take control of my life and make it, y'know, START, but I don't have the energy and I wouldn't know where to begin anyway.

Sincerely,

Sufferin' Sucka-tash

Answer

Dear Sufferin' Sucka-tash,

The first year at college can be rough. After all, there are so many adjustments to make in a brief amount of time. Being away from home, leaving old friends and support networks behind, meeting new people, and being responsible for yourself may all be stressful in one way or another. You may feel as though you're not having the college experience that you feel you should be having, or the life that you feel you should be living, but there are a variety of options for getting into the groove of college life. After all, your first year experiences don't necessarily dictate your experiences in the following years at college.

College offers many opportunities to meet new people. Joining clubs that focus on a common interest, playing on sports teams, joining a school band, attending extracurricular workshops, community service volunteering, writing for the school newspaper, and/or participating in (or starting your own) study groups, are just some of the ways in which you can start to feel like you're having a "swingin'" time at college. Check out the Stressbusters Links to Success [2] for ideas of groups to join. Also keep in mind that it is common to meet new people during the second, third, and fourth years of college, through new classes and living in new residence halls.

You mentioned being in a "rut" and sleeping a lot. You may want to ask yourself when you started feeling this way. For example, did you feel this way prior to college? Have you ever felt
this way before? If you don't feel better after trying these and other suggestions to meet new people, would you consider transferring to another college? After all, what may have appealed to you as a high school senior may not meet your needs now. You may also want to ask yourself what you want out of your college experience. A competitive atmosphere? Excellent academics? A nurturing environment? Large or small campus? Liberal or conservative? Urban, suburban, or rural? Far away from or close to home?

Many people share your experience with having "trouble running up to people and introducing yourself." In order to address this, it may be helpful to come up with ways for feeling more comfortable with interacting with people that you don't know. Discussing this with a counseling professional, or a close friend who is not currently at your college, may also be helpful. You might also do a little research to see if your school has counseling services available for students. They may also offer groups and workshops you might be interested in as well.

As isolated as you may feel at college, you are not the only one who feels, or has felt, this way. You should be proud to have taken the first step to reach out for suggestions. Whatever you decide to do, good luck and feel better,

Alice!

Category:
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Resources
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside)  [7]
Mental Health Service (CUMC)  [8]
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