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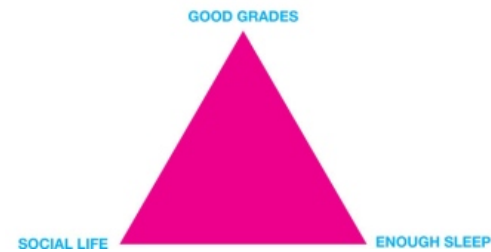
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COLLEGE GUIDE

CHOOSE THREE

You really can have sleep, a social life, and good grades



By **Maddie Rau**
 PUBLISHED: AUGUST 24, 2011

Are you a social pariah? Suffering from shitty grades? Frequently spotted staggering around campus like a sleepless zombie? Well don't feel too worthless if you answered yes to any of these — the college-life trifecta is considered unattainable by many. Even if it's too late to save myself, I've learned some lessons that may help you achieve a fuller and richer college experience.

To begin, let's talk about that classic collegiate fallback known as the cram session. With years of first-hand procrastination experience under my belt, I have three words about cramming: DON'T DO IT. Though it's as common as split ends, what most students don't talk about is the misery waiting at the other side of a 24-hour Adderall and energy-drink binge. If it's not specifically prescribed for you, the Adderall pains are a no-brainer. And while energy drinks do provide a short burst of energy while studying, the outrageous amount of caffeine and sugar in them will only make you feel even more tired later on.

I cannot tell you how many times I've stumbled into an exam, bleary-eyed and bitchy beyond what really should be considered legal only to find some over-eager classmate in a sweaty panic, worrying that the last 10 consecutive days of studying hadn't prepared them sufficiently. In the end, guess which one of us was more likely to blank out after receiving the exam.

Procrastination is the enemy; it is a butcher of good grades and all-important sleep. With the constant thrum of social activities on campus, the excitement can easily lead students to stray from their studies. Next to setting a schedule, one of my secret weapons for overcoming procrastination disorder is SelfControl. This application is the bomb. Though only available for Macs, it basically blocks access to any websites you choose — thinking Facebook, Gmail, Tumblr — for a predetermined period of time while allowing you to access the rest of the web.

Another trick involves giving yourself incentives for getting your work done early. If you get all your work done in advance, reward yourself with a gluttonous feast of the most ass-fattening delicacies you can find. Tell yourself that if you get all your studying out of the way the Friday before a big exam, you can attend every ABC-, Rubik's Cube-, white trash-, toga-, or mustache-themed party you want that weekend — or whatever floats your boat.

You probably already know whether you are a morning lark or a night owl. By timing your study periods to coincide with your natural circadian rhythm, you can boost your performance. If you have not found your circadian rhythm, I'd advise that you experiment with the time of day you study. Also, learn your study style — do you like studying in absolute silence, with Deadmau5 blasting into your Bose, or with a group of classmates at Starbucks? You should shape where and when you study around these factors.

Another simple fix with a ton of potential is getting to know your professors. Don't misquote me on this — I am not telling you to be a brownnoser. All I'm saying is, communication with your professor is key. A professor who knows you by name will unquestionably trust you more and this could come in handy in a variety of situations.

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COLLEGE GUIDE

When it comes to maintaining a blossoming social calendar, force yourself to make a schedule for each upcoming week, even if you aren't a big planner. Track your academic progress in tandem with the social events you wish to attend, and reward yourself when you have completed all the studying you'd planned at the end of each week. After all, it is easiest to stick with a plan when you can actually see that it's working.

If you're having trouble balancing your social life in particular, consider joining a social or sports club at your school. These are advantageous because they plan out all social events for you, and you don't even have to lift a finger.

My final word on achieving this collegiate trifecta is to be realistic. Don't get me wrong, studying is hard! It involves intense concentration, dedication of time, and the motivation to succeed. Underestimating the amount of time needed is common. So take a deep breath, don't get frustrated, and factor in some extra time to allow flexibility in your schedule. Or if you've read this whole thing and you're still against my tips on achieving collegiate bliss, you can always flip the equation and go to those parties now, cram for the next two days, and return to the land of the undead. •

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