Ryan’s Question: How’s the initial adjustment to college? Would you say you are still adjusting?

Amberly’s Answer: You sent me this question last year, little brother, because I had just gotten to college and it’s so different from our high school back in Sherborn. Now, I have one year of college under my belt. I not only survived that year, but managed to thrive as well. I joined a slew of extracurricular activities, threw myself into my classes, and landed this job with the Commonwealth Honors College. I did pretty well, and for all intents and purposes, adjusted by the end of the academic year. By the time I came back for year two, it would be smooth sailing from summer to new semester.

That’s what I thought, at least.

Then of course, I came back to UMass and things didn’t quite pan out as smoothly as I expected them to. It’s jarring, going from the summer’s low work load to the new academic semester’s “everything-is-happening-all-at-once” work load. I haven’t had as many naps as I would like to have had this semester! It’s a shame, truly. Nothing beats a really good afternoon nap.

In all seriousness though, a lot of things changed that I thought wouldn’t have. The reality that some of my friends, formerly seniors, had graduated really hit me in a way I wouldn’t have thought it would. I guess actually going back to school made it official and real: these people weren’t going to be in my life anymore, at least on the regular basis that they used to be. Even with the friends who are still on campus — some live closer to you than they did last year, and some live WAY farther, and while you’re still friends with all of them, the dynamic changes to various extents. Some friends who I just walked down the hall to see if we could hang out, I have to actively go out and make set plans with them.
It’s not necessarily a bad thing. But when it’s unexpected, it leaves a weird taste in your mouth, nevertheless.

There’s also the fact that because I have two jobs on top of my classes, I need to figure out an exact schedule that will work for my needs. For example, do I do all my readings stretched out along the week, or do I try to cram them all in the Sunday before? Little stuff and tactics like that, all of which time for me to see if they work or not. And I guess that’s the take-away from all this: you will still need time to adjust, even if everything is familiar to you or not. You still need time, and sometimes things don’t work out, and sometimes things are really different from the year before, and it’s okay. It's okay for everything to not be the same, for you to be jarred.

Things are not static in college the way they were in high school, and that’s okay. In fact, there may even be some beauty in it, in all the room these changes make for new possibilities.

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Amberly’s Answers

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