

Being Jain in College: An Experiential Guide

**How to Get Through College
In the Sanest, Most Jain Way Possible**



Sonali Vakharia

JAINA Education Committee

Federations of Jaina Associations of North America

Being Jain in College- An Experiential Guide

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DEDICATED TO:

All Jains of North America



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Preface

Jainism is a modern word to describe the ancient spiritual path of non-violence. The term Jain comes from the word 'Jina' which means 'spiritual victor'. It designates a person who is a conqueror of the inner enemies – anger, ego, deceit, greed, fear, attachment, and hatred.

The total Jain population is about 6 million in the world. In North America, there are an estimated 25,000 Jain families practicing the ancient traditions of this religion. At present there are 70 Jain centers and about 3500 Jain youth regularly attend the Pāthashālās at their local Jain center.

Despite talks of the demise of Jainism in western countries due to the spread and acceptance of the Western culture, Jainism still is a widely practiced way of life by Jains of North America.

The reason Jainism is still followed by today's youth is not only due to their upbringing, but it is mainly a result of non-sectarian Pāthashālās education and youth conventions teaching Jain principles and values to Jain youth throughout North America.

Moving away from home to go to college can be an exciting experience to our youth. However, it can also be a challenging experience, especially if you've been raised in a Jain family. Maintaining a balance between Jain values and North American college life can be very conflicting at times. However, finding that balance is definitely possible.

This book "Being Jain in College-An Experiential Guide" the author Sonali Vakharia shares her own experiences in the book and provides valuable information to balance the Jain values with college life.

As always, if you have any comments and suggestions for improvement, please feel free to contact Sonali Vakharia and JAINA Education Committee.

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Pravin K. Shah, Jaina Education Committee

01 - Introduction

Moving away from home to go to college can be an exciting experience you've probably been looking forward to for years! But, it can also be a challenging experience, especially if you've been raised in a Jain family. Maintaining a balance between your Jain values and North American college life can be very conflicting at times. However, finding that balance is definitely possible and is why I wrote this experiential guide to college life in order to share my own experiences with you. I attended a small college called the St. Louis College of Pharmacy, in Missouri for six years, leaving home when I was 17. I want to share what I learned during my time there, so that you can get some tips from my successes and mistakes.

While your experience will be different than mine, I hope this handbook can help you make sense of your own decisions and challenges in college. College is an amazing way to grow in every aspect of your life through the countless experiences you will have. You will meet people from different backgrounds and cultures, many of whom may be quite accomplished and high performing individuals. Learn from your surroundings, and make the most of your time in college, and while doing so, your Jain values will help you immensely. They will be vital in helping you maintain your identity, make decisions, and better yourself. Most importantly, though, irrespective of your experiences, I want you to know you are not alone. I wish that this book can make you aware that you can reach out to other Jains for help, which makes my advice here just one of many resources as you tackle this next part of your life.

It is inevitable that you will make mistakes. Remember, we all make mistakes, but don't be hard on yourself or feel guilty for making them. Instead, realize that you can grow more from each experience – especially when you keep positive, reflect on what's happened, and not make the same mistake twice. Remember that the person we mold ourselves into today will shape the person we are tomorrow.

Jainism focuses on bettering ourselves and our surroundings through nonviolence, improving our intentions, helping others, working on our flaws and weaknesses, and making certain decisions based on our values. For these reasons, I am going to

ask you to see each day within the context of the bigger picture and try to make a conscious effort to better yourself.

You'd think that as we get older, we'd become more and more apt to follow Jain philosophy. However, it seems that as students enter into this transition to college, a lot of what they learned becomes forgotten or put on the back burner. In one way, it makes sense. There's this newfound independence, the desire to fit in and experience new things. For those of you who may have left home to go to college, perhaps it's because you no longer have that presence of culture, religion, and family.

But, I want you to keep in mind that adherence to the Jain philosophy in college can directly influence our behaviors in the future. We all know this, but I think we forget to reflect on it consciously each day. This may not be true for everyone as some people go through "phases," but from my personal experience and the experiences I've observed of others, I think this can be applied to many people. My point is, everyone makes mistakes, so as long as you improve and mold yourself each day, you are headed toward being a better person tomorrow.

My goal is to help you be the best person you can be no matter what circumstance you are placed in. College sometimes tests your values and who you are, so my goal is to keep you as strong and as Jain as possible. I hope this helps you, and perhaps when a situation arises, you can reflect back on the pages of this guide. However, please keep in mind that these are mostly my opinions and experiences, and millions of other perspectives always exist. And, this is of course Anekāntavāda, recognition of the existence of multiple viewpoints.

Just to give you a better idea, there is a well-known Jain story depicting Anekāntavāda. In this story, an elephant is brought to a village. 5 blind men who have never seen an elephant have the opportunity to touch the elephant and describe it through their own blind "views." The man who feels the trunk describes the elephant as a branch of a tree. The man who feels the tail believes the elephant is more like a rope. The man who felt the elephant's leg said the elephant it was like a pillar. The man who touched the ear believes the elephant is like a fan. The man who touches the elephant's body argues it is like a large wall. In order to settle this

disagreement, another man tells them they are correct from their own viewpoint. By combining these partial viewpoints, a more complete and accurate description can be formulated. When applying such a simple story to our own lives, we should reach a conclusion that everyone has a viewpoint which from their perspective makes sense. In understanding people, we need to realize each person has their own perspective, and combining perspectives can lead to a greater truth. It will undoubtedly calm you down in many situations and help you develop a deeper connection with others.

If I have offended or hurt anyone through my words, Michchhāmi Dukkadam! If you ever need any help or advice, I will do my best to help, and I will do so in a completely non-judgmental manner. Please feel free to e-mail me at: sonalivakharia@gmail.com. I am here for you! Good luck!

Sonali Vakharia



02 - Food Availability

Throughout high school, we all had different dietary preferences: vegetarian, vegan, no root vegetables, etc. Sticking to this was not terribly difficult because we ate food from home and at local restaurants where we knew what we could or could not eat.

A college cafeteria takes some adjustment, but you can definitely make it work! When I started college, not only did I not eat eggs, but I was also not eating root vegetables. At my small, out-of-state college (smaller than my high school), there was not much variety of food available in the cafeteria. It was difficult to leave campus to go to a grocery store or restaurant due to safety issues on public transportation and not having a car. Nevertheless, I survived!

Most of you will probably have larger and safer campuses with more food and transportation options than I ever had. If you do have a difficult time finding food options, there are several actions you can take to maintain your dietary preferences and avoid the dreaded “Freshman 15” (the 15 pounds magically gained when you leave home for the first time).

1. Locate All Your Food Options

First, understand what your dining options are. Where are all the different eating areas, whether cafeterias, restaurants, or take-out places? Get a lay of the land.

2. Talk with Cafeteria Staff and Get Creative

Second, talk to a supervisor in the cafeteria. Countless friends of mine have done this successfully when options were limited, so there’s no need to feel embarrassed to ask. The food service companies are there to serve you. Writing comments on feedback cards is not enough. You have to talk face-to-face with management and get them to understand your needs. Use statistics to your advantage, because food service companies have to think about the college population as a whole in addition to individual needs.

For example, state that implementing more vegan options will benefit all vegetarians plus those who are lactose-intolerant. Ask them to provide you with a list of ingredients for certain foods

you're interested in eating. Give them simple recipes that work for your dietary needs. It's important to start this process early for best results.

If a cafeteria is your primary option, make sure you try the different options that are available to you. You never know what you will like until you've tried it. Haven't gone to the salad bar yet? Create a garden of awesome on your plate. Never been a fan of the whole veggie burger concept? Dress up a veggie pattie in a new way, and give it a shot. It's relatively low in calories and high in protein and fiber -- a great combination. Many cafeterias will also have stir-fry stations. So as not to cook your dish on a pan that recently cooked meat, you can politely request the cook to use a clean or new pan. They will happily do so.

3. Make Grocery Shopping Fun

Thirdly, go to grocery stores using a car or public transportation. Don't have a car? Get a group together with someone that does -- classmates, dorm mates, fraternity/sorority members, or club members. You loved going to the grocery store when you were a kid, so why does that have to stop now? Buy foods that are filling and healthy, and, of course, get some comfort foods for stressful times! Use your common dorm refrigerator (label your foods so people don't take them!) or buy a small refrigerator.

4. Deep Freeze Meals from Home

What else did I do? I bought a 5-cubic-foot deep freezer and stocked up my mom's food for months and months. Every time my parents came to visit, they would bring coolers full of individually-packaged food (mostly Indian food). Trust me when I say this, you will definitely miss home food. Pizza can get tiring after a while. The small containers were purchased in bulk from Gordon Food Service (www.gfs.com).

When I traveled home, I would carry tote bags of food back when I could. This basically allowed for me to store home food for long periods of time. I am almost positive all of you will find more options than I did, and eating home food is not the only way to go. But the point is, if I could make it with my limited diet and limited options, so will you! But, whatever you do, avoid filling up on just Maggi noodles!

5. Do Your Own Cooking – in the Dorm!

It's very simple to find dorm recipes online. If you have access to a stove, crockpot, or some more cooking resources, here is a link for great Jain friendly dishes:

www.vja.org/education/jain-recipes/

Before purchasing a crockpot, make sure to find out your dorm rules!

Remember: Just because your diet may be hard to follow does not mean you should give up on your Jain ideals. Stick up for yourself and your beliefs.

Here are some easy vegetarian recipes for the dorm:

Nachos

All you're really need to do is get some chips, add some vegetarian beans on top, sprinkle cheese (make sure there is no rennet), and add vegetables or jalapeños of your choice. Either microwave for 25 seconds or bake in a toaster oven for a few minutes. You can most likely find these ingredients in your cafeteria if you don't have access to a grocery store.

Pita Pizza/Pizza bagels

Either using wheat based pita bread or healthy whole grain bagels (make sure there are no honey or eggs), add some ketchup or marinara sauce, sprinkle some cheese (make sure there is no rennet), bake in a toaster oven for a few minutes and you're done! Or, using pita bread, you could even create a Mediterranean/Mexican/Italian blend – add salsa instead of marinara sauce and sprinkle mozzarella cheese (rennet-free), some green peppers and then bake in the toaster oven for a few minutes. You should be able to find these ingredients in your cafeteria!

Oatmeal

In case you are looking for a healthy snack, you can always cook some plain instant oatmeal in the microwave and add some nuts, berries, cinnamon, brown sugar to make it taste better. Avoid flavored oatmeal (apple cinnamon, etc.) because these are loaded with sugar and will defeat the purpose of eating oatmeal in the first

place. Of course, this can also be found in the cafeteria as a breakfast option.

Guacamole

For 4 people, grab 2 avocados. They should be slightly brown and somewhat soft. If the point at the end of the avocado looks ready to fall off, that's the sign of a ready-to-eat avocado. Cut the avocado skin the tall way and scoop out the inside into a bowl. Add a good amount of fresh squeezed lemon or lime or concentrated lemon/lime juice. Also add a good amount of salt (to taste). You can add Vegenaïse for a creamier texture and tangy flavor. Also add tabasco or garam masala for some spice! Mash with forks (or a potato masher) until creamy and enjoy! Dig in with tortilla chips or other scooping agents of choice.

Lentil soups/dāl (very healthy option!)

If you're looking for a healthy option, and if your dormitory allows you to have a crockpot/slow cooker, this is a great way to cook some lentils and get some additional protein. You will have to buy some lentils at the grocery store or at an Indian grocery store.

Step 1: Measure out 1 cup of lentils, and remove all debris (rocks, etc.) which may not have been filtered out.

Step 2: Using a strainer or colander, wash the lentils and drain the water out.

Step 3: Under a low setting, add the lentils and 4 cups of water to the crockpot (proportion should be about 1:4 lentils to water.) Allow to cook for 4 hours. If you want to speed up the cooking, cook under a high setting, and cook for 2 hours.

Step 4: Turn off crockpot!

Step 5: Remove lentils and strain water out. Add to bowl and add spices accordingly.

**If a crockpot is allowed in your dorm, there are so many other crockpot recipes you could find online! **

03 - Meeting People

Meeting new people is one of the most enriching and exciting parts of any college experience. It may seem like a challenge, but it's actually really easy to do -- especially during your first year of college. The great part is that most of your classmates will feel as nervous as you do! This makes the first semester of freshman year the best time to make friends. Of course, you will continue to meet people throughout the years, but freshman year is when everyone is still getting to know each other.

There is so much you can learn from meeting others. Figuratively speaking, you'll realize that people literally come in all shapes and sizes, and that the more exposure you get, the more confidence you will gain and the more you will learn about the real world. Yes, it can be challenging and maybe even scary at first, but it's sort of like going to the gym...you'll be sore for a few days, but the results you gain will make you stronger and ready to tackle on more.

Making Friends

Living on campus does make it easier to make friends. You can never get lonely in a college living situation. You will meet people almost all the time. Of course, there are some cons which come with this. If you don't live at home, chances are you'll have more noise, lots of social distractions, and peer pressure.



Meeting people in college is much different from meeting people in high school. In college, it is the norm to be your own individual self without being judged. You can usually find people with a similar thinking pattern or beliefs -- especially in a large school. Even if you can't find this, it's usually accepted that you don't need to change for them and they don't need to change for you. It's all about maintaining your personality, staying true to yourself, and accepting others as they are. And, within this handbook, I will give you tips on how to do these things.



Keeping an Open Mind

It's great to have friends to have fun with, and you should always love spending time with your friends. But, also try to become friends with people who make you better or people you can learn from. Yes, it is possible to find both! That is the best advice one of my old bosses ever gave to me.

My closest friends and I, no matter how different we are from each other when it comes to our habits, personalities, and career choices, have always had at least one thing in common – similar

values. As a result, there exists a “silent comfort” between us. They may drink alcohol or eat meat, differ in religious culture, opinions, etc., but they have the same values as me when it comes to honesty, caring about others, and having good intentions. It is important to realize that having friends with similar values and morals definitely helps in the long run, and you will feel much more comfortable, trusting, and mentally stable with them.

In college, I noticed that many people hung out with people of the same culture. The Chinese hung out with the Chinese, the Indians hung out with the Indians, and so on. There’s nothing totally wrong with this. However, it’s important to try to learn from other cultural groups and their values. It will open your world and your mind.

Here’s why... As the world is expanding, more ethnicities are coming together than ever before. North America has become a large melting pot of different cultures. The university setting is an ideal place to learn from as many people as you can! Why is this important? By relating through personal experience, I have learned that every person has their own strengths and weaknesses, but often times, different ethnicities also have their qualities and values. By spending time with other ethnicities, we can gradually remove that “ignorance” we often carry and learn more about the world. College is a great opportunity to mingle with as many people as you can and learn what is important to them. It’s like a free pass to understand people on various levels, so that when you graduate, it will be that much easier to do anything, because at the heart of it all, there’s always a person you are connecting to. Talk to everyone. Try new cuisines. Ask others about their religion and culture. Find out the meaning behind their traditions. Travel. I guarantee at some point, you will find an area where you connect well, and perhaps be able to incorporate something (value, new perspective, etc.) into your own life. I truly believe that my progression and growth as a human being would have been inhibited had I not exposed myself to people of various cultures. In this way, you will also be able to apply Anekāntavāda in that you understand the viewpoints of those who differ from you without having to change your own values! That will make you wiser, happier, and you will find it easier to connect with others.

Many people in college are open-minded. I have not met one person who did not respect me for being Jain. They enjoyed

learning about Jain philosophy from me. If someone is not open-minded with you, then leave it at that -- move on and move forward. Keep the following in mind: People may respect you for your beliefs, but you also need to accept them for theirs and not be closed-minded or judgmental. Avoid stereotypes and prejudices. Ask questions about their beliefs and culture. Be inquisitive! When you say things, you need to say them in a way that doesn't sound like your way is the only right way, especially when it comes to your beliefs. Being balanced about my opinions is why I have been able to maintain many friendships even when my friends are different from me in quite a few ways.



Trusting People

It is very important to trust others to develop deeper connections, but a word of warning: Some people have different motives and intentions. This is not to say that there aren't wonderful, amazing, sweet people out there. This is just to tell you to not be naïve like I was and end up getting hurt. This may be difficult to comprehend until you're actually in a situation like this, but perhaps you will remember what I am telling you if that situation does arise. Just be careful and don't believe everything you hear.

For example, I knew someone who would make up stories of negative things that others said about me. They sounded very real. This person would make it sound like she was telling me these

things to help me “learn and improve myself.” What I found out later, when I got a little smarter, was that she was telling me these things so I wouldn’t befriend these other people and would become more attached to her as a friend. How twisted is that?

So, you have at least four years to make mistakes and to learn from them. In this time, you will find that not everyone is as equally trustworthy as you or as you’d like them to be...and, you’ll also find that they are not always what they come off as at face value. Just remember that you have to take in the good with the bad, but you always have a choice and no one can take that away from you. In other words, it’s important to trust people, but wait until you get to know their personalities and intentions before trusting them completely. From doing this, I have been able to filter out and keep the best people possible in my life! If you’re not really sure, just go with your gut feeling. It’s a big world out there, and I want you to be smart and learn from my mistakes.

Taking Time for Self

On another note, you don’t have to be extremely social if you don’t want to be. It’s good to embrace the introverted side of yourself and make time to be alone. Some of the world’s greatest thinkers were introverted and managed to make the largest impact on the world, including: Gandhi, Sir Isaac Newton, and Rosa Parks.

To get an idea of how much you can gain from getting in touch with your introverted side, check out American writer and lecturer Susan Cain’s TED Talk on “The Power of Introverts”: TED talks are a global set of conferences which aim to spread ideas by using short yet powerful talks. Link is:

www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts.html

or you can also read her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts*.

Building social skills, experiencing new things, and finding time for yourself all help you grow in different ways. Do you want to be a person who is very sociable, but who has trouble finding comfort in your aloneness or finding value in other things and vice versa?

I think we can all agree the balanced choice of being both an outstanding personality and mentally aligned would be ideal. You can create that balance!

Yes, it is very exciting that you may be on your own and get to meet new people. But, do not forget about your parents, family, and old friends. They are your biggest support system and have played a large role in the person you are today. Make time for them regardless of how near or far they are from you geographically -- even if it's just a phone call to your parents every few days.



High School Friends

As you and your current high school friends separate and go to different colleges, it may be difficult to maintain these relationships from a distance. For some people, college is a time for metamorphosis. You may find your high school friends changing, and you may change as well.

It is possible to keep in touch, though. I've been blessed in that I am even closer to my old childhood and high school friends now than I was even back in school. This was surprising because we

only spoke once a month, communicated on Facebook or through e-mail, and saw each other on our visits back home from college.

Making time for each other takes a lot of effort and a desire to maintain the friendship. With the advancement of technology and resources such as Skype, FaceTime, texting, calling, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and so on, it's much easier to keep in touch. Remember that a relationship is not one-sided – it takes two to keep it going!

If you're one of those people who ended up at the same college as your old high school friends, it will definitely make the transition from high school into college easier. There is nothing wrong with keeping close with your old high school friends, but also make it a point to mix with new people! There is so much to learn from others, and it will be refreshing to make new friends.



Being Independent

Why is it important to be independent? Once college starts, you may move away from your parents and take on many more responsibilities. In other words, college is a transition for you into the real world, so it's important to learn how to take care of and spend time with yourself without the need of constant company. It's vital to gain comfort in your aloneness. Make sure to find

hobbies and to not be swayed by others and their perception on what they feel like you should be doing or who you should be spending time with. Don't be surprised if you find people who get offended when you do your own thing. Find a balance if you can. Hang out with your roommate or other friends for some time, and then go do your own thing. Or, if you can, start off your college life being independent so others will not make expectations of you. But always, always make time for your friends.

04 - Roommates and Dorm Life

If you are moving away from home for college, it can be difficult to deal with those changes, especially if this is the first time you've been away from home.

One way to relieve homesickness is to bring objects from home that remind you of what you're missing, like a family photo or a favorite souvenir from a vacation. It can also be helpful to stay connected with your home, by regularly calling family and friends to make the transition easier on everyone.

The five key things you will need to live well with others in a college dorm are: open communication, compromise, tolerance and understanding, respect, and patience. Not everyone has the maturity or personality to apply these qualities to their relationships, but if you can be conscious of this, it will help you live more harmoniously with your roommate. Remember, it takes time to get to know someone well before you two can establish a great bond. Also realize that males and females handle their relationship differently. Additionally, there is not one correct way to live with and connect with your roommate.

Open Communication

Why is open communication important? For the same reason it's important you communicate well with your friends and family. Neither you nor your roommate is a mind reader. Unless you are straightforward (in a polite manner), how are you going to let your roommate know of your needs and concerns? It's important you are approachable so that your roommate is also comfortable reciprocating the straightforwardness. And, when you and your roommate understand each other through open and honest communication, it will also assist with your application of Anekāntavāda. When you live in such tight quarters with another person, it is easy to sense tension. So be honest, be open, be caring, and keep good intentions. If there's a problem, try to address it maturely. And when you appreciate something, let your roommate know! It is really encouraging and a positive reinforcement for a better lifestyle together.

When moving into the dorm for the first time, how can we express our concerns and habits with new roommates without making it awkward or starting off on a bad note? Whenever my college graduate friends move in with a new roommate, they now know to sit down together on Day 1 and lay everything out on the table in a comfortable way. My friends ask the new roommate what their pet peeves are, if there is something they like done in a certain way, and if they have any needs which should be met. And, then my friends reciprocate and tell their new roommate what bothers them, etc. It really helps to lay this all out because knowing what is important to the other person makes each one more likely to be more respectful, aware, and conscious of their actions. Do not make it sound like you're making rules, and be cool about it. You could start off the conversation with, "How about we discuss what bothers each of us so that we can be respectful and conscious of those things and make our transition smooth. You can go first!" Remember, everything is about effective communication. Speak respectfully and straightforwardly! But, be careful and follow your gut when you are sharing all this information. Also, if you don't feel comfortable doing this on the day you move in, you can bring this up in your own way at a later time, when you feel more comfortable around your roommate. Again, there is no "right" way to deal with a new roommate, but this is a viable option which is highly dependent on your roommate's maturity level.

Compromise

You will also need to compromise at times. Why? Because you can't have a "my way or the highway" attitude. You are both human beings and will inevitably have a difference in opinion or preference at some point. Try to find a middle ground. For example, if your roommate likes to listen to loud music, you could let them know that you are totally fine with loud music (you can go to the library and study instead), but that you like to sleep around 11 pm so you'd appreciate if the music could be turned down after 11 pm. Or, let them know that you're "cool" with having friends over, as long as it doesn't turn into a full-fledged party while you're trying to study.

Again, do not make it sound like you're making rules! In almost all cases, if you're flexible, your roommate will be, too. However, if there is something that really bothers you, go ahead and let your

roommate know in the kindest way possible, whether it be on the first day or later on. If he or she still doesn't listen, tell him/her again. And, if it becomes a huge problem or something you can't tolerate or deal with for the year, you can always ask the RA for advice or try to switch roommates. But, try to resolve conflict in the most peaceful way possible. Try to find a middle ground, but sometimes, you may have to "give in."

Tolerance and Understanding

Things to keep in mind:

- You may have to share a fridge, freezer, room, trashcan, or microwave with non-vegetarians
- Your roommate may have a boyfriend or girlfriend and have them over often
- He or she might be a slob
- He or she might party often or throw up in the middle of the night

You cannot always control these things. In these cases, you have to develop tolerance and understanding. Try to see your roommate beyond any incidences that annoy you and appreciate him or her for who he or she really is. Keep in mind that they make mistakes too, just like you.

Respect and Patience

What helped me to gain respect and have patience was using Anekāntavāda. Anekāntavāda is one of the most fundamental and important concepts in Jainism. As mentioned earlier, this is the understanding that multiple viewpoints exist and that no single viewpoint makes up the complete story or the complete truth. This is very important to me, especially in my relationships with people. It gives me a lot of peace, because I can be conscious of the fact that another person may have a reason or viewpoint that I may not understand because I am not in their position.

It's important to know that other perspectives exist. Everyone is raised differently, so you must accept these things about others. It took me a long time to learn to do this, but I am happier now that I can accept people the way they are. If you need to, get two refrigerators or use separate shelves in the same fridge, have a pre-established cleaning day, take the trash out more often. Work with your roommate and be tolerant and understanding of your differences.

Developing the Roommate Relationship

You don't have to be best friends with your roommate. Sometimes all you need is a mutual agreement to live in the same room. At the same time, it is great to establish a good relationship with your roommate by bonding, doing things together, etc. But, if you eventually find that your roommate is not your "type," and you've gotten "close" too fast, it would be difficult and offensive to "back off."

Spend time with your roommate and get to know them, but also try to get to know other people and keep your independence. You don't have to do everything with your roommate, and your roommate shouldn't do everything with you. However, in time of need, try to be there for your roommate when possible. You live together, and it's always nice to feel like you have someone there that you can depend on. It could be something as simple as letting your roommate know you can give them a call if they need someone to pick them up and get home safely. I'll give you some examples:

Luckily, my roommate turned out to be my best friend in college. One time, I got so sick that I almost had to go to the hospital. I needed an anti-nausea medication that my dad (who is a physician) prescribed and called into the pharmacy for me. I was so sick; I couldn't leave my apartment. I called about 8 people to help me out to pick up my prescription for me because my roommate didn't have a car and couldn't drive my mini-van. None of them were there for me or willing to help me out. My roommate ended up calling up some random person who she tutored to take her to Walgreens to pick up my prescription. This might be an extreme situation – I am positive you will find many people who

you can turn to in time of need, but sometimes all you need is that one person!

We had similar but separate lives. We did a lot of things together and had most of the same friends, but she had her life and I had mine. She was studying for her MCATs and liked to spend time at home, and I had some other friends I'd hang out with. We didn't always have to be together, and we were both respectful of each other's privacy. This is a mature friendship, but you may not always find this.



05 - Relationships

During college, whether you're living near or far away from home, it can be harder to avoid peer pressure. There's a lot of pressure in itself of finding a great group of friends in college. In addition, many of your peers may be in relationships or may encourage you to be in a relationship. In a new environment, you may be more inclined to follow your friends' suggestions and behaviors to fit into the group. If you're interested in dating, your peers' comments may be helpful. If you're not interested in dating in college, make sure you know what you want and don't want and respectfully assert this to your friends. Your sense of self comes from within and should not be based on the approval of others.

Relationships are a very touchy topic, especially within the Indian community. However, I feel like it's important to discuss because these things are inevitable in college. It's very easy to get influenced or swayed by the opposite gender. You're thrown into an environment where boys and girls spend a lot of time with each other, and there is nobody watching or disciplining you.

The way both people treat each other in movies and television shows can be inappropriate, and this behavior is sometimes mimicked by college students looking to express themselves in new – and sometimes destructive – ways. I know this may not apply to everyone, but here's a general reminder.

You may feel the need to conform in respect to how everyone is dressing, what they eat or drink, where they go, etc. However, you are your own person, and your choices are valid. When you encounter an uncomfortable or unknown environment/decision, make the choice that is right for you. Create your own style, and be confident with it, and you'll feel comfortable in your own skin. If others don't respect and like you for you, they may not be the crowd you want to associate yourself with. You should feel accepted by those around you.

You should also remember to treat everyone respectfully, we are all humans. Everyone has strengths, weaknesses, goals, unique personalities, feelings, etc. just like you. By treating everyone equally you may create an invaluable friendship which could develop in many directions in the future. Treating someone in a

way that may across as inappropriate or threatening will stick with you for a long time. From a Jain perspective, use Anekāntavāda when dealing with others even when you may not agree with them, and avoid the creation of mental, verbal, or physical violence.

Your behavior towards yourself and others is a sign of respect towards yourself, and your body. Your body is a shell which holds your soul, and the ultimate goal of a Jain is to improve the soul and see beyond this body and its pleasures. Being respected comes a long way and respecting yourself will attract respectful people.

Dating Scene

In today's world, relationships and dating can be stressful. To help alleviate the confusion, practicing mindfulness and taking care of yourself should be your first priority.

There may be instances where your values are questioned, try to stay true to your values and take time to know yourself. This is especially important prior to starting a relationship to know who you are what you like. Spend time alone doing activities you enjoy and give you life. Practice self-love and know what makes you happy.

With online dating and fewer opportunities to meet in-person, dating can seem overwhelming and superficial at times.

Take time to journal qualities you would appreciate and want in a significant other. Take time to also know what qualities you are not looking for.

When starting a relationship, be authentic, present, and honest. Try to practice vulnerability and share your own values. There is no one more beautiful than yourself - always remember that! Take time to learn one another and know what makes the other person tick. This takes time and try to not to rush this phase. With this, define and set your boundaries. Establishing healthy boundaries helps both partners feel comfortable and be more aware in your relationship. Be direct and practice self-awareness in such instances.

Understand your communication style and learn if you and your significant other are speaking the same language. In other words, communication styles are the means of sharing information with others through language.

If a relationship does not work out, do not be disheartened. It's a learning experience. Enjoy yourself and be honest with yourself. If something does not seem right, trust your gut feeling.

From a Jain perspective, being attracted to others, thinking, discussing, or engaging in sensual acts, or wearing indecent clothing which may be attractive to someone else are all considered ways that can harm yourself mentally, physically, and verbally.

It helps to keep in mind that you will be a completely different person when you're 25 than when you're 18. Every year that you age, you will change in many ways and by the time you turn 25, the things that were important to you then won't be important to you now. When you were 15, you couldn't wait until you turned 16 to get your driver's license! When you turned 18, you couldn't wait to move out of your home and experience the college abyss. In a similar, but deeper way, the things and qualities you are looking for in a person will change over time as you experience more of the world. A lot of 18-year-old relationships end because they are still changing and not able to maintain the commitment that a long-lasting relationship requires. Relationships require maturity to last. People change, values change, futures change, so things may end. Of course, there are always the exceptions, and I have also heard lots of success stories which started out at a young age. It really depends on the maturity level of you and your significant other.

Pre-Existing Relationships

If you enter college already in a relationship, things can be very different -- depending on whether your significant other also attends your college. If your relationship is long-distance, talk to them before school starts and set realistic expectations for each other. It's important to keep in touch, but you both need time to focus on school and make new friends.

Even if your significant other attends the same school as you, do

not be so invested in the relationship that you lose focus on your work and activities and lose the opportunity to make new friends. Remember that you both have important goals, and your relationship should be one that supports those goals, not serves as a roadblock to them. If things aren't going the way you want them to, communication is key. Make sure you build friendships with people you can rely on if you're going through a rough patch in your relationship.

Deciding to Date

If you do decide to date someone, here are some tips. These tips are not just for when you're in college. They can apply any time you are, or are considering being in any sort of relationship.

1. It's best to choose someone with similar values as you. I'm not saying they should be the exact same person as you by any means, because being different teaches you about other aspects of life and more about yourself. What I am saying is that fundamental values should be aligned. Choose someone who makes you better and respects you and your beliefs. Mutual trust, honesty, understanding, etc., are key. You will connect best with someone who shares your values. Long term, you'll have the highest probability of building a worthwhile future because you both may work towards a similar purpose. Short term, you'll have a smoother relationship because you understand each other due to these fundamental similarities in values.
2. Avoid dating if you're doing it because you feel bored or lonely. Everyone gets lonely from time to time, but it is important to find ways to be happy on your own first so that, once a committed relationship does present itself, you can be selfless and committed as well. One of my other favorite quotes: "In order for two halves to be whole, each half must be whole on its own." This quote changed my life which is why I keep myself busy doing what I love and enjoying it. Sometimes, the distraction of dating impedes one from doing their best in school and reaching their career goals.
3. A relationship should be based on mutual understanding,

trust, and respect. At the end of the day, it should be deeper than just an attachment with someone based on physical chemistry. It is best if friendship is the foundation because you can truly care for someone selflessly and genuinely.

4. Do not string someone along just for your present pleasure. It can hurt them if you have no future goals in mind. Of course, you may not be completely sure, but if you really don't see it going anywhere, let it go. If you lead someone on with no plans for a further relationship, that can undoubtedly lead to lots of heartbreak and pain.
5. Do not try to change someone, and do not change for anybody unless you choose to or if it's for the better. Everyone is the way they are for a reason, and we should embrace our differences. If the other person decides to change on their own -- or maybe even for you -- that's different. It should never be forced. How would you like it if someone tried to force you to change to fit their idea of a "perfect person"?

"Creating Heaven on Earth Through Compassionate Communication" by Dr. Hema Pokharna provides a helpful guide to resolving interpersonal conflicts and practicing compassionate communication. This can be applicable in your relationships with roommates, friends, family, significant others, classmates, and more.

Don't get me wrong -- you can definitely learn a lot from romantic relationships (tolerance, your own flaws, commitment, compromise, etc.), but you can definitely learn all of these without relationships, as well. It's up to you and what you feel you need. And don't be too hard on yourself if you do make a mistake. But, to prevent a mistake, always keep your purpose, goals, values, etc., in mind.

Jainism supports Brahmacharya (celibacy, or chaste living), which encourages avoiding sex before marriage and avoiding sexual thoughts to retain a clear mind and rational thinking. For more information, read "Brahmacharya and Celibacy" by Shardule Shah on *Young Minds*. However, if you do choose to be sexually active, we believe it is important to consider contraception and STI prevention methods.

Resources for Relationship Abuse and Sexual Harassment:

- <http://studentcaffe.com/thrive/health-and-wellness/abusive-relationships>
- <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/educated/healthy-vs-unhealthy-relationships/>
- <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/educated/relationship-abuse-faqs/>
- <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/educated/sexual-assault-faqs/>
- <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/help/how-to-help-a-friend/>
- <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/help/>
- <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/help/develop-a-safety-plan/college-safety-plan/>
- <https://www.rainn.org/articles/staying-safe-campus>
- <https://www.rainn.org/after-sexual-assault>

Your dating choices are a discussion for you alone or you and your parents. Keep in mind, this is what I have learned from my past experiences, but other opinions and experiences do exist.



06 – Organization and Health

Disciplining yourself to work on your own is difficult, especially in the beginning. You are now thrown into a world where you have to wake up by yourself for class (although you also have the option to sleep in), do your homework, get good grades, keep your room clean without your mom telling you to, do your laundry, find Jain friendly foods to eat, spend time with friends, exercise, manage the millions of fun distractions thrown your way, work a job, and maintain a Jain way of life -- all on your own.

Your mom and dad may be there as moral support, to provide you with money for your expenses, possibly to take laundry home once in a while or to drop off some food, but for the most part you are on your own.

How can you survive? The best ways to do so are through time management, prioritization, and seeing the “big picture.” When it comes to completing all these tasks and waking up for class, you have to learn to be disciplined. Fundamentally, you must develop will power. Check out Tim Ferris’ *The 4-hour Work Week* to get some good techniques for how to be effective at Organizing and Time management.



"What to Do When Your Parents Don't Understand Your Mental Health" by Sachin Doshi may be a helpful resource to you as well as "Jainism and Mental Health: How My Renewed Faith Made Me Stronger" by Dhvani Mehta. Both articles discuss how you can take care of your mental health, what resources may be available to you, and are applicable to the lives of college students today.

"Breathing and Meditation: Jainism in Action" by 2018 YJA Convention speaker Bhavisha Shroff provides daily short meditation practices and self compassion exercises you can do at any time.

Make Organization a Priority

It's not my place to tell you exactly how to spend your days in college. But just keep in the back of your mind that lots of money is spent to pay for classes, whether it's your parents, you, scholarships, or student loans funding your tuition. It's an amazing opportunity to have access to this education, so try to be conscious of this before deciding to skip class or slack off. Yes, sometimes they do put lectures on podcasts, which may be more worthwhile than class, but during the appropriate hours, try to make sure you are studying or doing something productive if you aren't in class (i.e. Not sleeping!). Ultimately, you know what's best for you. College is expensive, and it only happens once! And, there are so many people in this world who would do anything to have an opportunity like this -- you are very blessed. So, try your best to do well.

It's important to enjoy college, but your grades are also important. You may not know what your plans are, or your plans may change after 4 years, so try not to slack off. For instance, I got a little distracted during my final years of college, and I ended up having to make up for it by doing many extracurricular activities to prepare for my residency application after pharmacy school. This was extremely stressful. Thankfully, I did end up getting a residency in my field at a great institution, but if I had kept my grades up even more, I may have been more at ease. Make time for your schoolwork, friends, and yourself. This brings me to my next point.

Write Out Your Routine

It's very important to manage your time well and develop a routine. Have an idea of what you might do that day, and try to stick to it. This routine might include things like: classes to go to, homework you want to finish, chores you want to accomplish, people you may want to hang out with. Perhaps you can schedule a date with your roommate to clean the dorm, the bathroom, or whatever needs to be done. This way, you have two people pushing you to get it done. Sometimes, making "to-do" lists helps.

Some people have planners, but not everyone likes this idea. Some people are planners, others are not, but staying organized goes a long way. Prioritize what are the most important things for you, and focus on those first. If it helps, make quick to-do lists. It's important to live in the present and enjoy it to its fullest, but always have an idea of the "big picture," and what your goals are.



Schedule in Health

Make time to eat healthy, exercise, and relax. It will not cause you to gain the "Freshmen 15," and it will also allow you to feel like you're doing something for yourself. Exercising also helps you stay happier, healthier, and more focused (helps with concentration, too). You'll like the way you look and feel. One of the biggest things for me that allowed me to be more productive and happier

was being balanced: making time for school, friends, hobbies, myself, working out, religion, relaxation, sleeping, etc. It's difficult, but I want you to be more aware of where your time is spent and if you're really wasting it. Honestly, it's been 11 years since my freshman year, and I'm still experiencing health issues from a terrible diet and lack of exercise during college. Fixing them has been a real struggle.

In college, you may not have a lot of space to exercise or a lot of time. However, there are many small, easy exercises that can be done either at home in your dorm room without any equipment necessary. Here are a [few](#).

If you're considering taking on a more intensive exercise regimen, it's important to do so safely. Before exercising, be sure to properly warm up and after exercising, to properly cool down, such as by walking briskly or stretching. When you are starting a new regimen, rather than pushing yourself, start slowly and gradually increase your speed and intensity. We also recommend that you listen to your body and take rest days, as needed, to avoid overuse injuries. When exercising, be sure to stay hydrated, such as by drinking water or drinks with electrolytes as needed. If exercising outdoors when the temperature is high, try to exercise early in the morning or later at night when the temperatures are cooler or slow your intensity and pace. If exercising outdoors when the temperature is cold, be sure to dress in layers and wear gloves.

Maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine may seem challenging but can be achievable in college. Some tips include developing an exercise routine, varying your meals, drinking water, limiting sugary and caffeinated beverages, learning proper portion sizes, and having social support, such as exercising with your friends.

Set Limits

I think something else that will help you is learning to say "No." I think it's very important to explore, try new things, meet new people, but there are also limits. One person can simply not be everywhere at one time. We are not machines. So, don't feel badly

if you need a break from socializing for a night and want to stay in. I say: do what you can or want, but if you need a break, take it, move forward, and don't feel badly.



Don't be a hermit either. Again, it's about staying balanced!

Make some "me" time. Embrace your introverted side and relax. It is healthy and important. Being alone assists with creativity and reflection. So, don't forget to spend a day in the park alone once in a while and soak it all in!



07 - Parties, Alcohol, and Drugs

Going to college should be very exciting for you all. And it is only human to want to fit in. You may be pressured into drinking or doing drugs, and you may even feel the need to do so. But, in reality, you don't need to change anything about yourself to fit in. I'm sure many of you have been exposed to drugs and alcohol in high school, but it's different then because you're living at home and surrounded by lots of security and family. In college, you'll be surrounded by more of it and have the independence to make decisions about it on your own. Within this chapter, I will address the science/health aspects of drinking/drugs, the Jain perspective, reasons I do not drink/do drugs, and what you can say at parties to stay strong.

What is the difference being fitting in and feeling like you belong? Fitting in is being liked based on others' expectations which has an external focus. Belonging is feeling loved and cared for, for exactly who you are. This has a more internal focus. So how do we make that shift from fitting in to belonging? We do that by realizing that having that experience of belonging is an outcome of being aware of own's values. When you have identified your values and found others who share your values, you are being celebrate for who you are.

Take some time to journal the following:

- 1) Name 3 values that are important to you.
- 2) What are some actions you can take that are expressions of those values?

What is important here and what I'm trying to get at is that it is important you're living your life with intention and awareness. Ask yourself why you're choosing to make the decision you're making and if you are really staying true to who you are. You will always have some mental conflicts, so hopefully this helps you with future decisions.

While Jainism does not promote the use of drugs or alcohol or partying behavior, some Jains may engage in these behaviors. If you choose to do so, it is important to do so safely.

Before going to a party, if you are going with friends, make a plan for the night - how you're getting there and how you'll get home. If you're going out with friends, it's helpful to have a designated driver and can be safe to stay together in a group. If you feel unsafe, it is recommended to safely leave the party as previously planned.

In general, we recommend that you refrain from using alcohol or other drugs. If you choose to drink, we recommend you eat before you go to the party to slow alcohol absorption, to drink in moderation, and to watch your drink carefully at all times.

To avoid health problems associated with drugs, such as overdose, refrain from mixing alcohol and drugs. In an emergency situation, call an ambulance. The police will most likely not be involved unless in the case of a death or someone feeling threatened.

Partying

I realize it is a common activity for college students to attend parties, and often becomes a good way to meet other people. However, avoid making this the only activity you engage in during your time in college. I really recommend keeping a balance. There is so much else you could be doing when it comes to socializing, so please do not close the doors on joining other activities. Explore the world out there. Never fear trying new things, and try to surround yourself with people who teach you about life, the world, and being open-minded.

Health and Science:

Alcohol Consumption

There are also quite a few health effects associated with alcohol use. Back to the basics: What is alcohol? It is classified as a depressant which, depending on how much consumed in the short term, can influence decisions, mental clarity, your inhibitions, coordination, etc. Per the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol “may have profound effects on brain structure and function, impair memory and the growth and integrity of certain brain structures.” The human brain continues to grow until at least

the age of 25, so things such as binge drinking (which can be as little as 3-4 drinks for females, and 5 for males) has strong potential to interfere with this process. Because the brain is still maturing, it feels the effects of alcohol more strongly and may cause a younger person to crave alcohol more.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 40% of most fatal car crashes have some sort of alcohol involvement! So, it's very important that you are careful when you are out with your friends. Don't drive with someone who may be under the influence of alcohol, as they are much more likely to get into a serious accident.

Long term effects of alcohol dependence and abuse include liver disease, liver cirrhosis, pancreatitis, cancer, heart disease, psychological disorders including anxiety and depressive disorders, which can ultimately lead to a slow and painful death.

Drug Use

Switching gears to the topic of drugs, marijuana is probably one of the most commonly used drugs in the country and will continue to be so with recent legalization of the drug in certain places. It contains a lot of other chemicals in addition to THC which can give you a high and cause addictive behavior. Also, it contains many of the cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco smoke. Use of marijuana leads to impaired coordination, which can double your risk of car accidents when you smoke and drive. It can impair short term memory and increase heart rate. Some recent studies have shown that with chronic use can lead to decreased IQ, likelihood to drop out of school, depression, anxiety, cardiovascular problems, cancers, and memory problems. Marijuana can also make you more prone to try other drugs which can be very dangerous.

For some, alcohol and drug use may be done mostly in social settings. However, information I have received from past drug and alcohol users -- especially those who are addicted -- say that taking drugs has distanced them from family and friends. It has made them feel more depressed. They feel a sense of guilt which causes them to use more drugs and alcohol to counteract that, and then it becomes a vicious cycle. In other words, drugs and alcohol are toxins. Do we really need to put these in our bodies?

The Jain Perspective

Before partaking in any activity or making any decision in life, ask yourself, “What value do I see in this?” How is this decision or act going to positively impact you or those around you? So when it comes to alcohol and drugs, ask yourself the same question. Consider all different angles including its impact on your spiritual growth.

There is some very vague and light research that alcohol and drugs may inhibit spiritual growth. Although some of the methods of this research is questionable, some research by the Spiritual Science Research Foundation has also shown that alcohol could close or limit the activity in your chakras or energy centers. Freeing or opening these chakra centers lead you on a path of more spiritual growth. But, why is spiritual growth important?

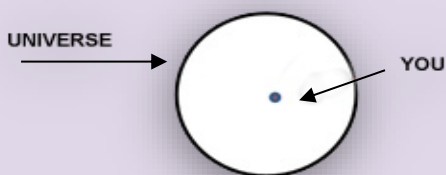
Do you ever question your purpose? Why were you born? Are you living the life you should live with the right purpose in mind? If you don't ask yourself these questions, that is a problem. As Jains, all souls are considered equal having the same exact purpose of freeing themselves from the cycle of birth and death and liberating the soul. Keeping this purpose in mind will always help you decide if a decision, an argument, or any situation is truly worth engaging in. And, you will notice that petty things that would normally seem like such a big deal will become such small, futile things. My friend once said, “Spiritual life is what distinguishes us from other beings.” And, compared to any other species, as humans, we actually have the ability to ask these questions about our spirituality. We have the ability to mold ourselves for the better. An animal or insect would not be able to do those things. And, for these reasons, because we have this ability, it is important to be concerned about your own spiritual growth rather than let this life go to waste. So, at the end of the day, is drinking or doing drugs worth it?

Apart from the peer pressure and because it is “risky” or “adventurous” why is it that so many students engage in drinking and doing drugs? It's probably because it “feels good.” As we all know from studying Jainism, external substances which affect the mind should be avoided. Alcohol and drugs can suppress one's inhibitions and awareness, especially based on how much is consumed. This may lead to more mental violence and, in turn,

lead to more verbal and physical violence.

Furthermore, alcohol is a fermented beverage with an infinite amount of bacteria. The Vegan Society also reports that some alcohol beverages may be made with fish, gelatin, and eggs!

And, finally, Jainism also discusses the importance of controlling the mind and certain pleasures such as these highs and feelings obtained from drugs and alcohol in order to focus more on the inner self and less on our body. Why is it so important that we focus less on our body and more on our inner self? We are 1 out of an innumerable amount of souls on 1 planet out of innumerable



planets in 1 galaxy out of innumerable galaxies in 1 universe out of 1 universe. So, it's important to see the big picture.

In the scheme of things, we have to remember our presence is really so small. Is drinking or doing drugs going to assist with elevating our soul in any way? Let's try to make the most out of our time as we were fortunate enough to be born a Jain on this earth - and, it all starts with the right habits. And remember to ask yourself what the "value" is of these acts.

Why I Don't Drink or Do Drugs

Sometimes not drinking can cause you to feel lonely because everyone around you may be doing it, and you may also feel alone simply because you do not agree with it and others do. To avoid feeling this way, apply Anekāntavāda. If there is one thing you can learn from Jainism in general, it is this concept. Anekāntavāda can be applied to any situation that arises and leaves you at peace -- just understanding that other viewpoints exist and that yours is not

the only one. Love everyone regardless of their choices! There are choices you make that others may disagree with it.

Just because someone drinks or does drugs does not make them a bad person. Just because you do not drink or do drugs does not make you morally superior and just because someone does, does not make that person morally inferior. I actually feel like some of my closest friends are better people than me even though they drink sometimes. In the same way, your choice to do these things or not will not make you a better or worse person either. I say this to help you avoid any internal conflict you may feel as you move into this new phase of your life. Everyone was raised differently, and alcohol is actually an important part of some cultures. By respecting the way everyone was raised, including yourself, you can alleviate a lot of stress. You will be able to communicate with others with the least amount of judgment – of classmates, friends, family, and yourself.

In college, I was open about avoiding alcohol, animal products, and root vegetables, and, although it sounded crazy to some people, people always respected me for sticking to my beliefs. As I worked on judging no one through Anekāntavāda, I hoped people would do the same for me. This is something to keep in mind all of your life, but it definitely helps when you go to college. What really helped me, especially at parties or around those who had habits different from mine, was deciding to have a good time and not to be judgmental. And what was really cool was that when I accepted others for their differences, they accepted me back. We formed really strong connections and bonds through the understanding of our differences.

It really wasn't easy at first, and it took a lot of time to get in the right mindset, but you will get there. Have patience with it while others get to know you for who you are. So, why don't I drink (or do drugs)?

Under-age drinking is illegal. And, even being in the presence of under-age drinking or possessing a Fake I.D. can lead to some trouble with the law, depending on where you live.

1. I don't think it's necessary to "conform," just to "fit in." I have been able to make friends with drinkers and non-drinkers throughout my entire college career and

onwards and have a great time at parties without drinking any alcohol.

2. It's a liberating feeling to be able to respect other peoples' choices while maintaining your own belief system. People will, surprisingly, respect you for it even if they may push you to drink. Yes, I have had people try to pressure me before, but I have also literally had people come up to me at parties and bars and tell me they respect me for sticking to my beliefs and being able to come out with them, be sociable, and have a nice time without needing a drink. You will find that if you are able to withstand such social pressures, you will be able to withstand many things in other aspects of life. Overall, it will make you a mentally strong person.
3. Some people tell others that the reason they don't drink is because of their religion. I do not disagree, but at the same time, I tell others that it is a "personal choice." It makes it sound more of a personal decision. When you decide on your own that you don't want to engage in this practice, you will be more strong and responsible.
4. I don't feel comfortable with the idea of allowing something to alter my mind. I like having control. I feel stronger this way. I like enjoying things for what they are and not having this skewed perception of reality.
5. I want people to enjoy my company for what it is. That's why I still get invited to parties and to go out with friends although I don't drink. It's about your personality, friendliness, etc.
6. I am not judgmental of others who do drink, do drugs, etc. And I don't let them feel like I'm being judgmental. Just as you were raised not to drink or your personal choice may be not to drink, they were raised differently. In cases like this, use Anekāntavāda, and it really helps to accept people as they are and connect with them. Everyone has positives and negatives, including you. And you can still learn from others. Do not let something like this mask the person they are within. Connect with them, and be understanding. Find their goodness and

love them.

7. I have become more productive because even if I do go out, I don't wake up hung over. Or, if I don't go out, I have so many other things I could be doing (such as hobbies, studying, working, relaxing, computer browsing, volunteering). I'm not wasting money on alcohol, and can either save it, spend it on something worthwhile, or donate it. I see the world in a completely different way, and I feel wonderful! Some people might start drinking or doing drugs due to boredom. I suggest finding a hobby in that case.
8. By nature, I'm a pretty curious person, but I've never really been very curious when it comes to drugs and alcohol. I see nothing positive about altering my mind. This is my opinion, though.

Things You Can Say to Stay Strong

So, what should you do at parties? It's up to you! I can't tell you what to do. But, if you decide you don't want to drink, don't be scared to say strongly but politely, "Thanks, but I don't drink." If they ask your reasons, always give a response. Don't be offended by questions. First of all, you should know why you don't. Second of all, people like to know why, and when they know why, they often let it go. So, think about why you don't drink and formulate a response. Is it because of Jainism? Is it because you are strongly against it? Or, do you not really know? Maybe you're just not comfortable with it. You don't have to go in detail.

I usually just say, "It's against my religious beliefs, but it is mostly a personal choice for me." And if they need more detail, I say, "I usually have a great time without it, so I don't need it." And if someone asks, "Haven't you ever wanted to try it?" or "Don't you feel like it?" or "Don't you just want to relax and have a good time?" I usually say, "Not really. I'm just not comfortable with the idea of something affecting my mind. And, I can relax/have a great time without it." You definitely don't have to go into that much detail, but that's an example. Standing up for your beliefs isn't hard; it just requires some confidence.

This concept can be applied to anything you believe in. Be

confident and know why you believe or don't believe in something - not just with alcohol but with everything in life. Sometimes, people may feel like you're judging them because they are not used to bumping into someone who doesn't drink. Never make them feel like you are judging them, and you can even add in, "Yes, it's a personal choice, but I judge no one and still have fun when I go out, etc." Moral of the story: Whatever your reasons are, know why and verbalize it if you want.

Saying it out loud will help you to know your reasons and stick to them. But again, the choice is yours! And whether you're at a party with lots of people or if you're just with one other person, if you have a drink, even just a coke, keep your eye on it at all times- I have known people who became victims of date rape whether they were by themselves or with groups of people. Try to always be with someone you trust.

Networking

When it comes to networking and work life, I have never had any problems with regards to my choice to not drink. However, I have not been in any other world but healthcare, which is a much milder and accepting atmosphere when it comes to social pressures. I have seen some very successful Jain entrepreneurs, businessmen, and lawyers who don't drink. But you may not need to worry about this until you are much older. By then, you may have figured out how to handle these types of pressures well. I personally believe if you need to change your morals to fit in with your boss, you need to look at the big picture and decide if it's worth it or not.



08 - Open-Mindedness and Exploration

In college, you'll experience different types of cultures, people, thinking, lifestyles, hobbies, etc. Continuously practice Anekāntavāda. Always, always remember that there are other perspectives. Keep this in mind whenever you are with others. Being able to think from someone else's perspective has allowed me to connect with others on higher levels. It has helped me learn from them, as well. It has kept peaceful discussions going and friendships blooming. It's actually nice to make friends and learn from different cultures and backgrounds!

Even when it comes to religion, completely respecting another person's beliefs will allow you to explain your own religion to others more confidently. Even if someone lashes out at your religion, do not lash back. As calmly as possible, explain that you believe that there is not always one correct answer or religion, and that you are open to hearing other people's beliefs. You may have to quietly walk away, especially if you start feeling uncomfortable.



Be open-minded to trying new foods, experiences, school clubs, classes, people, travel, etc. I'm telling you, you will open your world to endless opportunities and possibilities if you try new things! College is such an eclectic, diverse community, and once you get into the real world it can be difficult to have this much of a concentrated exposure to these new things. So please open your minds and explore! And no, I am not saying you should do extreme things like bungee jumping or sky diving. That's totally your decision! I am simply suggesting you try little things that might be scary to do at first. After all, "life begins at the end of your comfort



zone.”

This could include traveling abroad, going to your first outing with a new group of people, or even going to your first meeting for a club whose purpose you're passionate about. What gets me through this is another one of my favorite quotes: "Do one thing every day that scares you!" It will push you to try new things, and you will feel so much stronger and accomplished. However, I suggest that whatever you do, make sure it is safe and doesn't contradict your morals.

09 - Explaining Jainism to Others

In college, I used to get uncomfortable explaining myself to others, because I did not want to deal with conflict, arguments, and judgment. But, we have all heard people speak so confidently about their faith, so why shouldn't we?

I had a friend who would make me explain to him what my reasons were for everything I did – including why I ate or didn't eat certain things. My friend said that the reason he questioned me so often was to give me practice for the real world -- and he was right. I get questions about my beliefs all the time at work. For this reason, you need to know why you do something and be confident about it.

Think about being in the other person's shoes -- how can you break this down for them so they can understand? Sometimes it may seem like it's easier to direct them to the internet, but I think it's better to take the time to explain it well to them. Presenting it well is the key way to get your point across: So here is something which may help you out a bit.

The Jainism Elevator Pitch

If you're looking for short, sweet answers that are to-the-point, Yogendra Jain, author of the book *The Jain Way of Life* and a great teacher and mentor, has created something short but detailed enough that you could basically describe Jainism on a short elevator ride. Here's what he's calling the "What is Jainism?" Elevator Pitch:

Jainism is a religion and a way of life. For thousands of years, Jains have been practicing vegetarianism, yoga, meditation, and environmentalism. Jains have three core practices: Non-Violence, Non-Absolutism, and Non-Possessiveness (Ahimsa, Anekāntavāda, and Aparigraha – AAA).

Non-Violence is compassion and forgiveness in thoughts, words, and deeds towards all living beings. For this reason, Jains are vegetarians.

Non-Absolutism is respecting views of others. Jains encourage dialog and harmony with other faiths.

Non-Possessiveness is the balancing of needs and desires, while

staying detached from our possessions.

Jains believe in the existence of a Soul – in each living being – which is eternal and divine.

JAIN WAY OF LIFE (JWOL) respects and honors all living beings through the practice of Non-Violence, Non-Absolutism, and Non-Possessiveness. We are all interdependent and, by living a JAIN WAY OF LIFE (JWOL), we can bring peace and spirituality to our lives and to those around us.

You can see the whole elevator pitch here:

<http://www.jaina.org/blogpost/258456/66935/Elevator-Pitch-on-Jainism-What-is-Jainism>



Always feel free to add on as much as you desire or have time for, but this is a pretty simple and understandable explanation. Sometimes I go into the concepts of the theory of karma or moksha if I have time and I feel like the person I'm talking with would understand.

When People Say, “You’re Wrong!”

Most people are pretty open-minded when you share your beliefs, but you'll find the occasional person who just won't accept it. The

worst situation is when someone tries to tell you you're wrong. It's important to remain calm and not argumentative when this happens, as Jains should. That's when I bring up the concept of Anekāntavāda.

I say, "Hey, we each have our own beliefs and perspectives, and in some way, we are all correct, and there's no one correct way. I have my own beliefs, and you have yours. I think it would be interesting to hear yours." (That last part is good if you really want to change the subject and to let it be known that you are open to their beliefs!)

The Jain philosophy can be applied universally. Most people are looking to better themselves, so never fear explaining Jainism to others! Whether it comes to discussing what I believe, purchasing music rather than downloading it for free, avoiding meat, not harming insects, or anything else, by demonstrating and explaining my Jain beliefs to non-Jains, they manage to become more conscious of their own thoughts, words, and actions.

Again, remember, Jainism is not the one and only universal truth. Every religion and belief has something positive to offer. So, continue to be respectful, accepting, and inquisitive. This will help mold you into the best human being you can be.

Doubt and Figuring Out Your Faith

In college, I had to do a 50-minute presentation on Jainism for my World Religions class. Taking everything I knew about Jainism and compiling it into 50 minutes was one of the most difficult tasks I had ever had to do. Not only did I have to prioritize what the most important concepts would be to teach to people who knew nothing about the philosophy, but I also had to question my own beliefs.

After doing some research, I had to work out what I found to be inconsistencies in belief and practice. This led me to have a 6-hour phone call with my mom and to undertake more research in order to fill those holes in my understanding of Jainism. After presenting and being asked many questions about Jainism, I left that class feeling more knowledgeable on Jainism, and having an even a stronger faith in the philosophy. And, that is when I learned that when you are able to teach something well, you have learned the topic well.

10 - Spirituality and Practicing Jain Rituals

I realize not everyone feels comfortable praying or partaking in rituals. But, taking 3-5 minutes (more is better, and to really hit that sweet spot, anything more than 20 minutes is ideal), to sit in silence and practice some deep breathing will make a huge difference in your day. It does have a cumulative effect, so staying consistent in your practice is ideal. You hear that silence and being mindful is so important, and may even ask yourself, what can a few minutes really do anyway? The proven effects of deep breathing, meditation, and yoga are endless - it has reduced stress levels immensely, reduced anxiety and anger significantly, cured disease since many toxins are eliminated through the breath- like I said, the effects are endless. It gives you that time to sit, reflect, and be still. I practice something called pranayama before doing certain kriyā and yoga, all of which have literally changed my life. I highly recommend trying out different types of deep breathing, meditations, and yoga. You'll most likely be able to find meditation and yoga groups on campus.

If praying is something that feels right to you, I do recommend trying to make some time to pray each day, even if it's just 2 to 3 minutes. You could keep a few photos or small idols of Bhagawān in your dorm -- if you feel comfortable doing so. If you feel strongly about Jainism, it will be a constant reminder of the tenants of Jainism and culture. This of course depends on how strongly you feel about these things. At least, let it be a reminder of Jain philosophy and its vows, which can be applied to any person regardless of faith: non-violence, truth, celibacy, non-possessiveness, and not stealing.

You can always take some time to recite the Navakār Mantra at the very least each day. You can always recite more sutras if you want to and if you have time. If you'd rather not put up any photos or idols, then you can take a few minutes in the morning and at night to recite Navakār Mantra in your head. Also, just an interesting thing to keep in mind, these prayers which have been passed down to us are said to be very powerful as they create a channel into the universe to bring in divine energy. I have seen some miraculous things happen in my own life, and being involved in some kind of prayer frees your mind from thinking negatively as

well.

As we know, Paryushan is the most auspicious time for Jains. If you can't make it back to home for it, don't worry! Check if there are temples nearby holding the festivities including pratikraman. Sometimes people even offer their homes for this purpose. However, if you don't feel comfortable going alone, there are English versions of pratikraman published and online, and they are not difficult to obtain. JAINA has published one, as well, which can be seen here in PDF:

<http://www.jainelibrary.org/book.php?file=000241>

These only take an hour or so to do. I used to do it in my own dorm room, and I had a Jain friend who joined me once in a while.

Take advantage of Jain youth groups on campus, if they exist. Or you can even just find a few Jain friends with whom you can spend time with during Paryushan. You are not alone! If you ever feel that way, contact Young Jains of America (YJA) at education@yja.org to find ways to get connected to other Jains around you. There are also many YJA Facebook groups and events for the various regions around North America. Make sure to search for and add them on Facebook!

"A person who meditates for a few minutes a day to purify his mind surpasses one who has done penance of fasting for days"

"Religion does not guarantee that there shall be no sorrow or suffering. But it does guarantee that there shall be strength to face them calmly." -Unknown

11 - Safety

Whatever you do, make sure you stay safe. This is not to scare you, but to make you alert and aware. There are quite a few rapes, murders, and muggings that happen each year on college campuses. Here are some tips for getting around, especially when the sun goes down:

1. Don't walk around alone. If you're on an unsafe or urban campus, don't risk walking anywhere by yourself. If it's late and you're alone, call campus security or the campus escort service to drive or walk you to your destination.
2. Add numbers for local taxis to your phone. It may be helpful to save numbers for local taxi companies on your phone in case it's too late to walk or take any other mode of transportation. I also suggest downloading the UBER and LYFT applications onto your phone for emergencies, but try to be with at least one other person when entering these vehicles. TRUST YOUR GUT if you feel it is unsafe.
3. Remember, there's strength in numbers. Try to walk around campus with people you trust so you're not alone when it's dark out or you're in remote areas. Girls, have at least one guy friend you trust that can walk home with you late at night.
4. Keep in mind that you're not invincible. Do not forget that. I have friends who thought they were immune to getting mugged and were beaten up or were almost robbed while walking alone. So be careful -- everyone.
5. Stick to pathways. Avoid taking the "road less traveled!" Walk or jog on paths that are well lit and commonly taken by others. Avoid darker alleys and wooded areas that are more remote.
6. Always be aware of your surroundings and trust your gut. If something seems suspicious or not right, find a safe place to be for some time until the coast is clear. It may help to carry pepper spray in your jacket or purse. If you feel like you're being followed, look for a well-lit area where there are other people around. If you somehow end up on an elevator with a person who makes you feel uneasy or uncomfortable, get off

on the next floor.

7. Park in well-lit areas of parking lots and streets. If you can, park as close to your destination as possible. Keep your keys in your hand and your head up and alert when you walk to and from the building and your car. Anyone up to no good will usually avoid people who look like they're aware of what's around them.
8. Drive on well used roads and avoid run-down areas. If your car breaks down, call for a tow truck and a friend, and stay in your car with the doors locked until help comes. And if someone you don't know walks up to your car, crack your window just a couple inches, only enough to speak. Muggers sometimes target cars that have broken down.

And here are some tips for staying safe in your dorms:

1. Keep your dorm room and outside door locked at all times. If you feel like someone has broken into your room or house, do not go inside. Call security for help. This is why it's good to save campus security's number on your phone.
2. Don't allow strangers into the residence halls. It's easy for them to follow you in, but this could be dangerous. Wait for them to pull out their keys or to call someone they know on the dorm building intercom or at the security desk.

People are not as trustworthy as you would like to believe, so don't be naïve. This applies to everyone and everyone should be more aware. Statistically, females have been more affected, but we want everyone to take caution. If you're out with a new group of people, don't trust anyone right away. Avoid being alone with them if you don't know them well. And, if you are in a situation where you must be alone with someone you don't really know, make sure you are in constant contact with a friend and that they know where you are at all times.



12 - Closing Remarks

I hope this handbook inspires you to be a stronger individual who is more prepared for the obstacles you may face in college. Everyone will have different experiences, but each one shapes us into the people we are today. Keep in mind that this handbook will not solve your problems. It is there as a resource to glance through when needed. Remember: Nobody but YOU can take responsibility for your thoughts, words, and actions. Learn from your mistakes and experiences, and make college count. I wish you the best of luck!



Notes



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