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Tracy Has No Friends

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Pick a day.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, any day will do. Swipe a spider card and walk into the university’s dining hall. There are three open, practically identical rooms - tables, chairs, tall windows, and chandeliers. It’s Hogwarts, without the glowing candles and mail deliveries from family owls.

But look down at your outfit. What are you wearing today?
Your skin—what color is it? Is it brown, white, or a shade in between?
Are you a student athlete?
Which sorority or fraternity are you a part of?
Maybe you’re an international student.
Maybe, you’re not an athlete, a brother, or from abroad.
Okay, hold on. So you aren’t any of these? That’s fine. There’s a place for you.

A place? Yes, a room where you can find people just like you. See the first room usually seats students that are from fraternities or sororities. In the second room you’ll find basketball and football players sitting with friends. And well, in the third room you’ll see mostly international kids—and anyone else.

The entire scene is a bit overwhelming, isn’t it? Imagine being a freshman and finding to your own not-so-pleasant surprise that upperclassmen seem to be divided up - sticking to the same rooms, with like people, day in and day out. Senior Masnoon Majeed is still at awe from the division he sees and he is always talking to freshman international students. He says that freshmen are often unable to find their niche on campus.

“Our campus is small. It’s a liberal arts college, and we’re a divided campus. You know the D-hall story. The third room, that third room,” he shakes his head and laughs a bit sadly, “If your niche is one of those three rooms, then you come into it because the divisions are so entrenched and strong.”

During freshman year, and maybe even sophomore year at that, it’s not odd to hear someone talking to an acquaintance in your dormitory hallway vocalizing their wonder and concern as to why they [with a slight hint of drama in their voice] “have no friends.”

Why do people feel this way? The d-hall scene definitely isn’t helping, with its subconscious call for people to think about where they belong. Do people sometimes feel friendless because they aren’t in a fraternity or a sorority, running around on a court or a field, or arriving from a different country?

Why else might it be so easy for students to feel ostracized, or left-out or friendless on Richmond’s campus? Many students transfer during their freshman or sophomore years for this reason alone.

Remington Pomaranski, a current senior, had a lot of her friends transfer early on. “Ninety-five percent of my friends during freshman year transferred before sophomore year. They didn’t think there was a space for them, and they weren’t willing to make one,” she explains, “I’m not saying they didn’t try hard enough, but I think they focused too much on what was wrong rather than what was really great or what they could change.”

Perhaps, the “I have no friends” illusion could be some of our own doings, and not a complete result of d-hall’s seating arrangements. As she watched her friends leave, Pomaranski started to believe that “this place really didn’t have a space” for her. “But then, quickly, mind you, I just thought, ‘well, if there’s less people like me then I get to stand out more and be some of the weirdness this campus needs.’”

Pomaranski believes that adjusting perspectives and attitudes will be a major key to finding friends. Matthew McKenna, a senior as well, agrees. “To improve, I think we all need to be, quite frankly, a little more accepting and friendly to everyone on campus. Just because someone does not do something the way we do it or have always done it, does not necessarily mean that their way is wrong, it just means that their’s is different,” he says.

Majeed explains that pressure also causes people to feel uncomfortable or alone. “I think a lot of [loneliness] would come, from my understanding, from how you see yourself. For me the thing was, if I like something or if I want something, I would not change it for other people. If I don’t want to drink, I’m not going to drink. If I don’t want to smoke, I’m not going to smoke. It doesn’t matter if 20 people around me are doing it, but that’s not how most people work.” Perhaps, we need to find ways to be comfortable in our own skins. Majeed believes that if we’re able to do this, people will respect you.

The dominating sight of similarities throughout each room in d-hall may be striking to some and go under the radar for many. Whether or not you see the divisions, one thing seems clear. There’s a no-friend trend, and it’s stemming from somewhere.

“As a student-athlete on the cross country team, it’s been a blessing to come into Richmond already feeling welcome and included by both the men’s and women’s teams.
However, I must admit I do not have many close friends off the team. Without them I bet I would feel very ostracized and alone in such a culture. ... It makes sense that similar people become friends with each other while those that seem different stay away from each other, ultimately leading to such a clique-typed atmosphere,” McKenna adds. Pomaranski gives her last piece of advice, “It’s just you have to be patient and look in the right places for the people that you actually connect with rather than who you think you should connect with. ... However, I do think that Richmond does have a dominating ‘type’ of person or student that some people can focus on and thus develop this idea that they are too different - kind of a ‘self-created’ separation.”

There are a high number of white students in Greek life on campus and Richmond is often identified as a school with rich, white, privileged kids. But how can we find our way through the pre-conceived notions? How can we stop late night conversations in Moore or Marsh Hall between freshman dormmates who say “I have no friends”?

“Sure, I have days where I feel lonely and friendless” Pomaranski says but then smiles, “But give yourself more credit than that. Realize that you’re probably saying that [you have no friends] to a friend, c’mont!”

“I think people need to try more on both sides,” Majeed said. If you go with the three room analogy, I think people in all the rooms need to challenge themselves. We should have a day - a no-division-D-hall day, where you sit randomly and you get to sit with people you don’t know.” Majeed laughed but was honest in his suggestion.

So what do you think, Richmond. How does a no-division-Dhall day sound? Let’s get out of our comfort zones and make new friends. Get a little uncomfortable. You might think this proclamation is lame, but if you’ve made it to the end of this article, maybe it isn’t so lame, indeed.

*Author’s Note*

The witchy, dark-haired girl wearing green and blue lipstick, found all the weird, eclectic people she was looking for at Forum Magazine and they understand her natural proclivities toward all things strange. We all find the right niches and there’s nothing wrong with them, just sit in a different room of d-hall and meet new people for god’s sake.

STORY BY TRACY AKERS