

Facts and Fiction about Relationships in College

K. Beebe
February 14, 2017

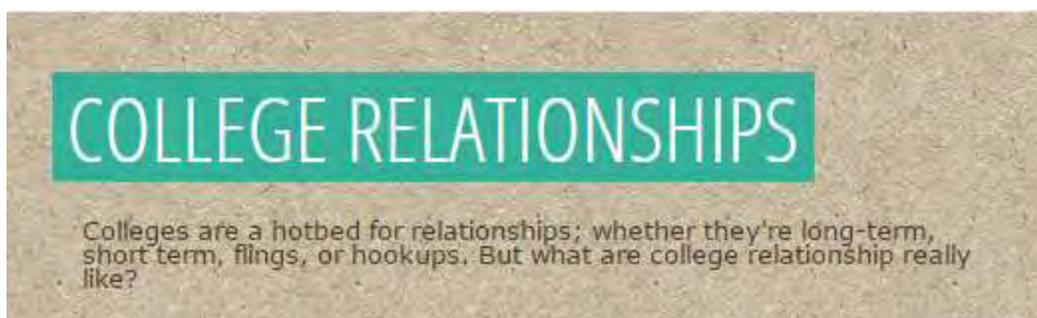


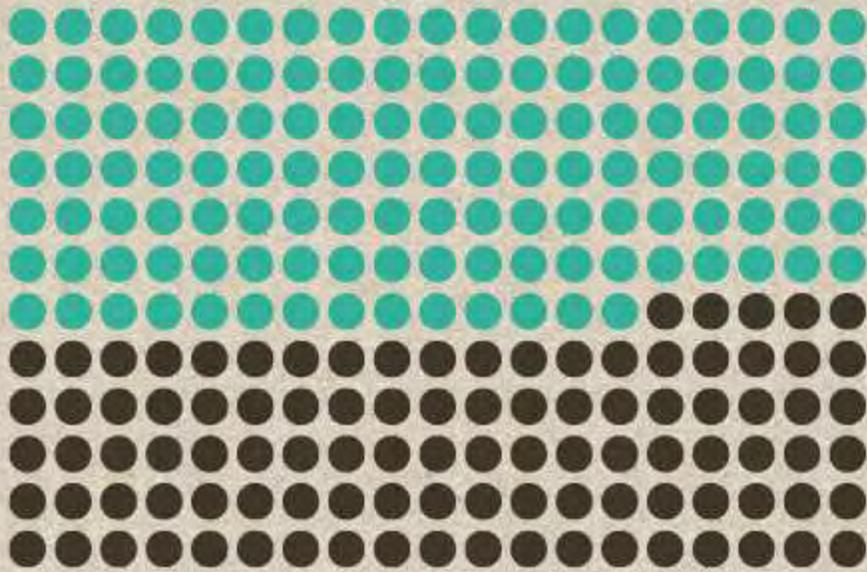
*“Love is the answer,
At least for most of the questions in my heart
Like why are we here? And where do we go?
And how come it’s so hard?
It’s not always easy and
Sometimes life can be deceiving
I’ll tell you one thing, it’s always better when we’re together”*

Jack Johnson’s lyrics sing about being in a loving, (probably long-term) relationship where the two are better together. Many of us want to be in a genuine, committed relationship at some point, but does this idea translate into a college environment?

Looking at the current climate of college students and relationships today, it seems that college students prefer shorter, more casual relationships over long-term relationships because it lets them focus on their academics and other aspects of their life.

Check out this infographic of surprising statistics about relationships in college.





● 56% of college students are women ●

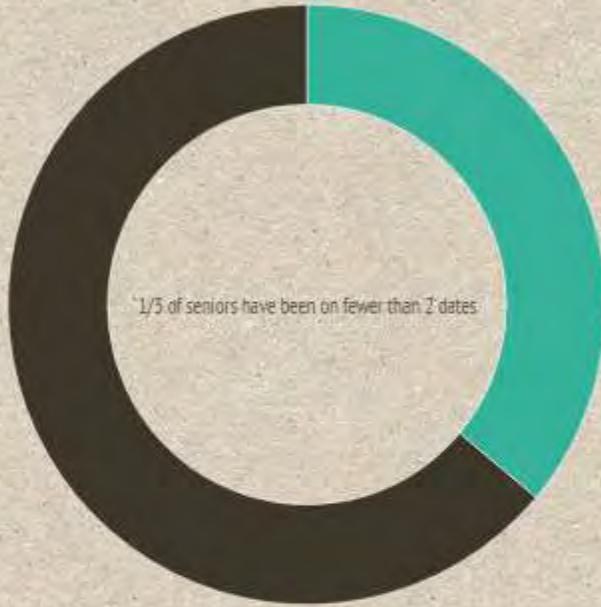
CHEATING IS THE MAIN REASON FOR BREAKUPS.



41%

Of students view their breakups as positive experiences.

Most breakups happen right before winter break, spring break, or summer vacation.

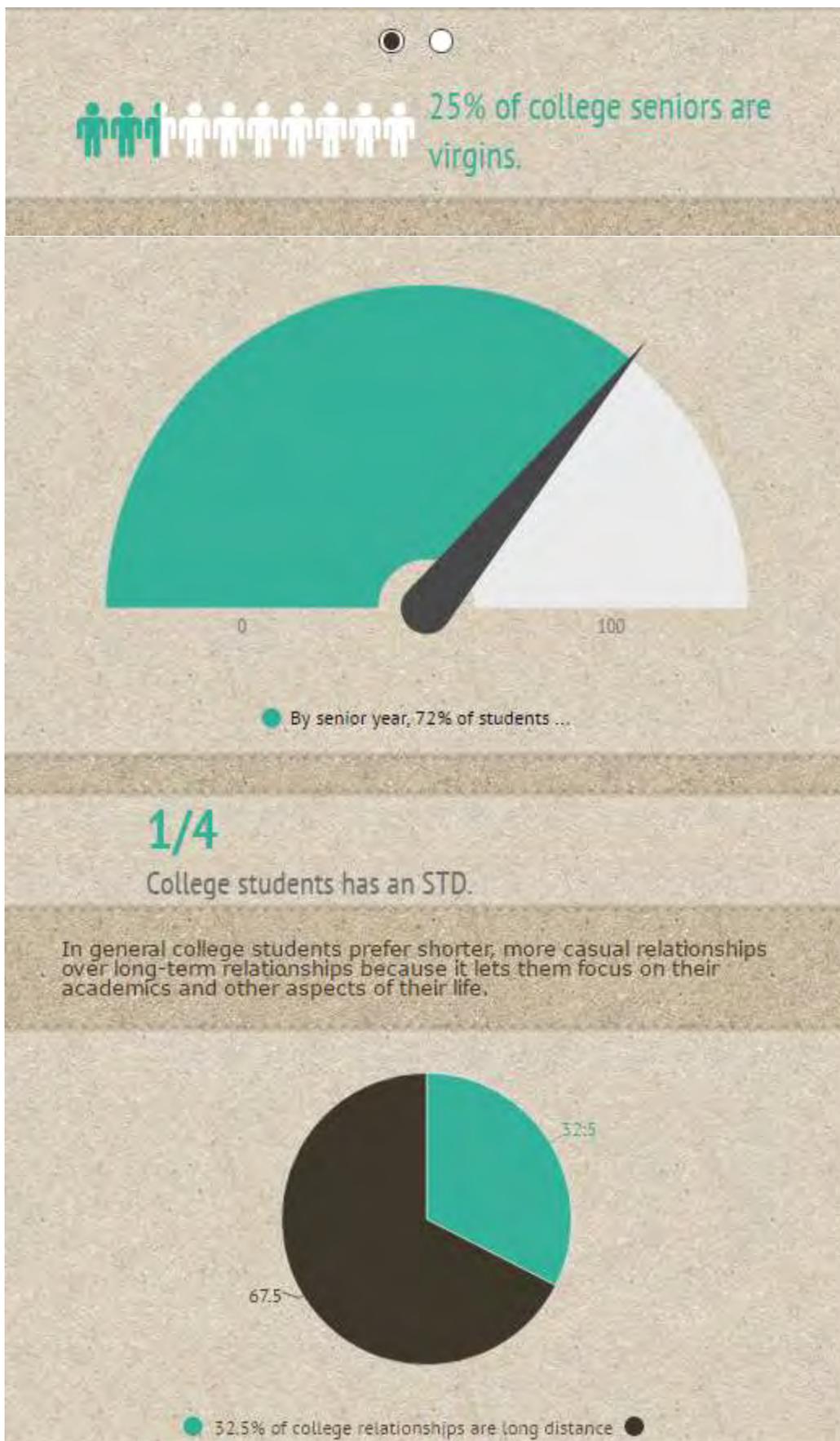


1/5 of seniors have been on fewer than 2 dates.



63%

Of women hope to meet their spouse in college.



According to a [recent study](#) by the American Psychological Association (APA), **between 60 and 80 percent** of North American college students have had some sort of hookup experience, even though **63 percent of college-age men** and **83 percent of college-age women** prefer a traditional relationship to an uncommitted sexual one.

These two sets of statistics just don't add up. An indicator could be that the culture on college campuses emphasizes a lifestyle of independence to focus on academic success, which would support the statistics in the infographic.

There is a very real concern for college students that a long-term relationship can derail their academic and career pursuits. But is it really reasonable to say that shorter, casual relationships allow for greater focus on academics and other priorities?

The Case for Long-Term Relationships

Some myths around long-term relationships in college is that they lack the fun element, they dictate your academic and career choices, and they are not likely to last. Instead, long-term relationships can offer stability, comfort, growth, fun and in college, even a push to do better in your studies.

We asked seven individuals who were in committed relationships while studying in college about their experience and here are the challenges and benefits they highlighted.



When asked how challenging it was to be in a relationship while studying, we got a mixed response, with some choosing *not challenging* and *challenging*. None of the individuals chose *very challenging*.

Some challenges to being in a long-term relationship were

- daydreaming and lacking some focus on assignments,
- time and physical constraints with long-distance, and
- assigning a schedule to the relationship.

These challenges might seem counter-constructive to one's personal growth since there is another person to continuously keep in mind.

This is why the benefits shouldn't be overlooked to understand why someone would choose to be in a long-term relationship while studying.

Interestingly, the benefits were essentially the same for the seven participants in this survey. When asked how helpful it was to be in a relationship while studying, every participant but one stated that it was *helpful* (the other one participant chose *very helpful* and none chose *not helpful*).

The overall benefit to being in a long-term relationship is having a consistent partner for emotional support and someone who will push you to do better. The participants felt they were better together.

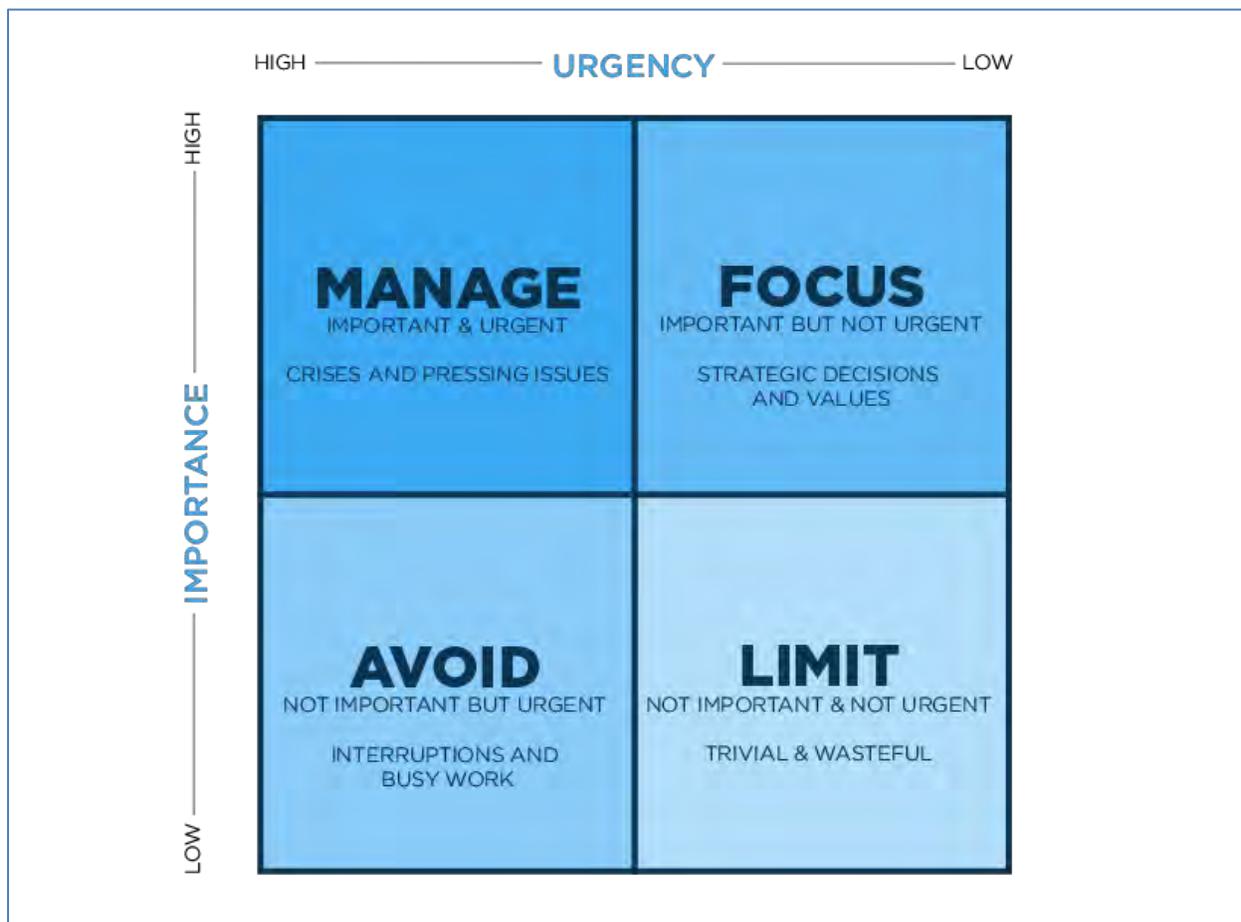
In the stressful moments during exam periods, final assignment due dates, and internship application season, having someone who is just as interested in your success as you can be reassuring, comforting, and even motivating.

The benefit of having a trusted, supportive partner outweighs the challenges of finding ways to keep the relationship energized and nurtured for these individuals who chose this alternative to short-term, casual relationships.

You Choose Your Distractions

Naturally, as a college student, you want to do well in your studies, discover your career path, and maybe even explore other extracurricular activities that campus hubs offer. Having relationships are another natural disposition for college-aged young adults.

It's a game of time management in the end. It takes some good sense of your time and what it's worth to figure out what to fill it with.



Casual, short-term relationships might seem like a great compliment to this time management issue since one would think you are limiting your time and effort for a romantic relationship (effectively placing long-term commitment in Box 4).

But let's consider these relationships a little more deeply. There is such a thing as [hookup regret](#) with negative side effects such as lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, and disappointment. As an important side note, the hookup culture has an even more negative affect on women and is often characterized as a pressuring environment.

Dealing with a breakup is also taxing on a person's emotions so your time and effort doesn't end with the termination of a short-term relationship.

There's no denying that the stress of these scenarios drains students emotionally, which can affect their academic success. Yet, some students come to think that casual, temporary relationships won't distract them in their academic pursuits.

Relationships – whether a casual, short-term one or a serious, long-term one – are distracting. But so is Netflix, social media, and the web, but we try to manage our time to include these luxuries because we recognize that these make us happy to some extent.

Some distractions are better than others. The seven participants of the survey expressed their willingness to *be distracted* by a long-term relationship because the benefits outweighed the challenges.

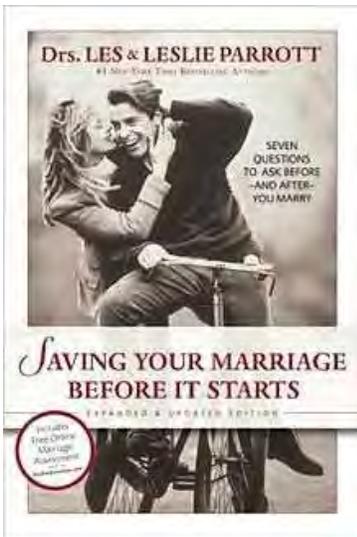
A committed relationship offers emotional stability and the constant support of another person, which helps drive one's success in other areas of life, including in academics. But, it takes time and effort to maintain that stability. A series of short-term relationships, in the long term, might take just as much time and effort but with little to no benefits.



Advice (for those in a long-term relationship)

- Involve your significant other in your studies and extracurricular activities so that he/she has a chance to take an interest in your goals and objectives. This way, he/she can be even more supportive and help you achieve those goals. Who knows, maybe even bouncing some ideas off one another could lead to some great insights! And, of course, vice versa.

•



Carve out some intentional time for your relationship, whether it's a weekend skype session, a daily phone call, or regular dates. A relationship can do wonders in supporting and uplifting you personally, but you need to reciprocate to the other person and the relationship.

- Confront your couple's challenges with the help of experts like Drs Les and Leslie Parrott ("[Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts](#)"), all the while keeping a sense of humor. We can't laugh enough!

Advice (for those not in a relationship)

- Of course it's okay to be riding the single train. A relationship will be all the more challenging the less you know about yourself. College is a perfect time to discover yourself and if you aren't in place to take on a long-term relationship, that is a wise thing to understand about yourself.

- Immersing yourself in a hookup culture or even a casual, temporary relationship for your convenience will probably not yield the best results for you and your goals either.
- Find ways to develop good relationship-building habits. It's important to focus on academics and your professional growth, but it's equally as important to cultivate solid, genuine relationships since these are the cornerstone to a life-long happiness.

At CARP, we promote a culture where we can develop genuine relationships through sincere, selfless interaction (one of the [core principles](#)). You can, too.