

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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Does Friends With Benefits Work?

It's not so simple. Friends With Benefits (FWB) means different things to different people. To most UA students, a FWB is someone you know (and perhaps trust) to have sex with — no strings attached. There is no commitment and no title like “significant other” or “partner” (more likely terms are “f---buddy” or “hook-up buddy”). The FWB may be a friend or an acquaintance. And, it may be somewhat of a secret relationship that even closest friends don't know about.

The advantages of having a FWB are sexual. You have someone to conveniently “hook up” with, but without all the time, obligation, energy, and stress that may accompany a relationship. When you have a FWB, you are free to enjoy the pleasure without most of the pain; unless one of you develops feelings and emotions— which often happens. Oxytocin, the “cuddle hormone” may be to blame for this.

Feelings seem to be the most likely disadvantage that may result. One partner may want a more emotionally intimate relationship. Another partner may develop a liking, even love, for their sex buddy. If the feelings aren't reciprocated, one partner can end up

feeling hurt or used. Because FWBs are free to sleep with other people, it's not uncommon for feelings of jealousy to arise.

The disadvantages also include greater exposure to sexual risks. Some people feel safer with a FWB because they think they “know” them better than a stranger they just met at a party. Having a sex buddy doesn't guarantee safer sex. If your FWB has several other sex buddies (the ones they keep secret from you in order to spare all those potential feelings), you can expect more exposure to sexually transmitted infections such as herpes, chlamydia, genital warts, and more.

Having sex with a FWB only works well as long as both partners play by the same ground rules: the “relationship” is about sex and convenience without any commitment or emotional intimacy. For many, however, these terms may feel like an unacceptable substitute for companionship. No matter what kind of relationship you are in, the best way to avoid hurt feelings and complicated emotions is to be clear about your expectations from the start, and communicate if they change.



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