



Living Together

Learning to get along and the art of accommodation.

Introduction

Living with others teaches us the art of accommodation. Rarely do you find the “perfect” partner(s) to share living quarters, those whose habits, likes, interests, and room-sharing expectations match yours. This reality will naturally produce potential for roommate conflict, which should be managed over avoided. This brief exercise begins the process of sharing expectations with your roommate(s). Through one or more short discussions you will surely understand each other a little bit more, discover some of your commonality, and move toward accommodating differences.

There is no expectation on the time you invest in this exercise. Managing conflict is not always easy, but it is worth it. For one, it is crazy enough adapting to a new a totally new environment. We believe having a solid relationship with your roommate is a worthy aspiration. Better to have “peace at home” than a continuous source of stress. Consider too that formal studies show managing conflict well is a core teamwork skill and teamwork skills are highly sought by employers.

Living together is an art.

~ William Pickens

“I’m not concerned with your liking or disliking me...all I ask is that you respect me as a human being.”

~ Jackie Robinson

Conflict is not a dirty word. Not to dwell on it, but if you can get past the taboo, the negative connotation behind words like disagreement, conflict, and argue will transform into potential for discovery, exploration, creativity, and the like. One reason we often find difficulty managing conflict is because, some of the time for some people and much of the time for others, we choose to avoid it, which works some of the time but not all. It rarely works with the person with whom you share living quarters.

**“If you truly want to be effective in today’s world,
if you sincerely want to understand other people,
it seems absolutely critical that we accept the reality that
all these people out there who are different from the way we are,
are just as right, correct, and normal as us.**

~ Morris Massey, PhD

“I believe that the very purpose of life is to be happy. From the very core of our being, we desire contentment. In my own limited experience I have found that the more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of well-being.”

~ Dalai Lama

Considering the investment being made in your education, college should be hugely rewarding on many fronts. Through this brief exercise we are trying to make your living experience as great as it can be, while sprinkling in a small practice session or two or three in the art of accommodating with others. No matter how it's done, addressing these and other topics will likely minimize the ugly realities of the silent treatment at one end and sudden blow-ups at the other.

**I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles;
but today it means getting along with people.**

~ Indira Gandhi

Directions

Think about how you'd complete each of these sentence stems and then hold a sit down with your roommate(s). Some of the topics are oriented to surface and deal with differences in expectations and others are oriented to remind us that we have a lot in common. Please understand that a response of "hell freezes over" might be the only acceptable option for one of you.

Topic	Notes
It will bug me eventually if this type of overnight guest activity occurs _____	
I'll be OK with you eating my food and drink, if _____	

Topic	Notes
My clothes can be borrowed only if _____	
Until we figure it out more, let's designate the following times to count on the room as a good study environment _____	
Here's how I would describe a perfect day _____	
When I think about great times with a close friend, here's what we are doing _____	
My pet peeves, those little things that tend to tick me off, include _____	
Already, I'm a little freaked out about _____	
I'd like for you to understand _____ about me.	

Topic	Notes
Not to be crabby, but if you do _____ I could feel disrespected.	
Artists that are music to my ears include _____	
Music that is difficult for me to enjoy includes _____	
When I “grow up” I want to become _____	
I feel I’m a lucky person because _____	

“We would definitely recommend the Roommate Exercise especially the first week of school. It allowed us the time to not only share personal things but to also make time to think about what we are expecting out of each other and what crosses boundaries. Instead of just having us sign a paper (prior college) where we awkwardly agreed to conditions to be polite, this gave us more comfortable approach to stating concerns or



limits without coming across pushy or rude. It opened up a lot of conversation and led us to a lot of laughs too.”

Julie Kay and Kristina ~ Rollins College

This exercise is offered free of charge to anyone who chooses to use it. Feel free to pass it forward. We know this exercise can get better and better. It will happen quickly if the creative energy of roommates is passed backward. So if you changed it up a bit and got something out of it, let us know what you did and how it worked out. We'll update the tool and tweak the state of roommate relationships together!

Please send your email to
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To check us out:
www.positivediversity.com

When we listen with the intent to understand others, rather than with the intent to reply, we begin true communication and relationship building. Opportunities to then speak openly and to be understood come much more naturally and easily.

~ Stephen Covey