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DORMMATES– LVING WITH OTHERS CAN BE TOUGH

By dan the roommate man

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Living on campus is very different from living with your immediate family. You may not know your roommates very well. You may come from different parts of the country, or different parts of the world. Your roommates may have different cultures, different religions, different habits, different lifestyles, and different customs. While these new experiences may initially seem a little strange or intimidating to you, they may also offer unique opportunities for greater understanding of others, more effective ways of communicating, and new avenues for personal growth.

On Campus Living: A Different Dynamic

Growing up, most of us lived with people very much like us: our families. After many years of living together, we adapted to habits of our family members, even if they were different than our own habits. After all, these people were our families. We had to get along with each other.

Living on campus offers a different social dynamic. The people you live with now are, most likely, not the people you will be living with for the rest of your life. While some students do develop lifelong relationships with their college roommates, others live

Although college living experiences are temporary, they offer students many different avenues for personal growth and understanding, and for building interpersonal skills which will help them build relationships after their college years have passed.

Understanding Differences

Living with persons who have different habits and customs can be an educational experience. Sharing differences with one another can lay the foundation for greater understanding of different religions, cultures, lifestyles, customs and traditions. The workforce of the new millennium will demand a greater understanding of the diversity of lifestyles, customs and ways of communicating, because technology has made it easier to link persons and companies across the world, with nothing more than a personal computer. Seen in this context, living with persons who have different customs and lifestyles can offer

DORMMATES– LIVING WITH OTHERS CAN BE TOUGH

students practical preparation for the workforce of tomorrow.

Not Getting Along With Your Roommates?

Here are some things you might try.

Talk To Them Yourself.

This answer may seem a bit too easy, but surprisingly, it is often an option that people avoid. It is easy to let problems go, until they seem so large that talking about them is intimidating. While it may be hard to approach your roommate if he/she is doing something which bother you, it will usually help move the problem toward resolution. On the other hand, if you don't tell your roommate that something is

bothering you, he or she may not know that you are bothered, and might continue to do the thing which bothers you. Even worse, if you seem annoyed at the behavior, he or she may misread this annoyance as animosity toward him/her. When this happens, it becomes very difficult to re–open the lines of communication.

Mediation

Mediation services are usually offered through your school's Residence Life staff. Mediation is a process where all parties involved in a dispute agree to meet with a third party, who listens to all sides of the dispute, and attempts to help the parties reach an agreement among themselves. To arrange a mediation, see your Resident Assistant or Community Assistant, or call the Office of Residence Life for your campus housing area.

Ground rules for the discussion are agreed upon at the beginning of the mediation, and each party is allowed to state his/her side of the dispute, without being interrupted. Then the parties suggest possible solutions to the dispute. The mediator may ask questions of the parties during the mediation, to help them suggest alternatives. Mediation is typically a give–and–take type of situation. Each party usually must make some type of concession to another party, in order for a solution to be achieved. The process does not always give each party a perfect solution. The emphasis is on peaceful compromise. If an agreement is made, it is usually put in writing, and signed by the parties involved, and the mediator signs as a witness. The original copy of the agreement is generally kept on file with the mediator for the term the disputing parties live together. The agreement is binding among the parties, and the terms must be followed by all the parties. Should a party violate the agreement, he or she would be asked to meet with the Resident Director, Area Coordinator, or another appropriate member of the Residence Life staff. If the other parties wish, another mediation can be held. The staff member would also discuss room change options with the person, if the problem could not be resolved.

The Mediation Process:

The mediator will:

DORMMATES– LIVING WITH OTHERS CAN BE TOUGH

1. Help the parties set ground rules for the discussion. Some typical examples:

- a.) Each party will listen without interrupting the other person.
- b.) No name calling.
- c.) Each person will "own" his or her own statements and feelings.
- d.) Time limits on each person's "turn."

The mediator should also ask each party if he/she has other possible ground rules or conditions for discussing the situation.

2. Allow each party uninterrupted time to state what he/she sees as the main problems or issues to be worked out.

3. Ask each party to state possible solutions.

4. Help the parties agree on some possible solutions, by re-iterating what has been said, suggesting possible compromises, and trying to help generate other alternative solutions.

5. The mediator should help the parties put the agreement in writing, have the parties sign, and then sign it as a witness. Each party should receive a copy of the written agreement, and the mediator should keep a copy on file for future reference.

6. The mediator should periodically follow up with the parties to see how things are going, and help the parties address any concerns which arise.

7. The results of the mediation should be kept confidential, between the parties and the mediator. (At some times, the results of the mediation may need to be shared with the mediator's immediate supervisor, but this will depend on the nature of the situation, and your university's policies. In many cases, this is only necessary in situations where a person may be in danger or when serious breaches of University Policy or the law have occurred.)

Direct Room Changes

If you know someone who you would like to switch rooms with, you can sometimes arrange a direct room switch. This involves talking to the person or people who handle room assignments at your school. At some schools, this is the Resident Director/Area Coordinator, at others it may be someone in another university office. Be sure to bring the person who you want to switch rooms with you when you go to request a direct room change. The assignments officer will want to make sure that person wants to switch rooms. You may have to fill out some forms to make the switch official. If approved, the people simply exchange rooms with each other, by checking out of their old room and into their new ones.

DORMMATES– LIVING WITH OTHERS CAN BE TOUGH

Usually, students must officially turn in their keys at the Residence Life Office or Commons Desk, and then check out a key to their new assignment.

Residents at many schools are welcome to advertise for direct room changes on the general postings bulletin boards in campus buildings. Some schools may even have "room switch wanted" bulletin boards in designated areas around the residence halls.

Emergency Room Changes

At many schools, you can meet with the Resident Director/Area Coordinator to ask about an emergency room change. These are granted at the discretion of this staff member, if there is an open space of the proper classification (undergraduate male, undergraduate female, graduate male, graduate female). If space is not currently available, you may be placed on a waiting list.

Most schools have criteria which define what constitutes an emergency. These usually include situations where there is some immediate threat to a student's safety, or when there are irreconcilable differences (after mediation has been tried).

While the decision is usually left to the discretion of the staff member processing the room change, most residence life departments have established criteria for when they will not move people to a new assignment. In many cases, room changes will not be arranged until a mediation has been tried, and a room change request may be denied if it is based on complaints about a roommate's race, religion,

ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation. To learn more about your school's room change policies, talk to your Resident Assistant, or another member of the Residence Life staff.

Should You Try to Get Out of Your Housing Contract?

At most schools, the housing agreement is a legally binding contract. Releases are usually granted only under rare and extenuating circumstances (withdrawal from school, marriage, medical problems, etc.) It is important to note that releases are usually not granted because of roommate conflicts, because other options are available through the Residence Life staff (mediation, room changes, disciplinary action).

Requests for contract release must usually be made in writing to the assignment officer or to the Director of Residence Life or Housing. The conditions which might warrant granting you a release and the procedures for requesting such a release should be spelled out in your housing contract. That is why it is important to read and understand your school's housing contract and its provisions. If you didn't keep a copy of the housing contract, you should be able to request one from your Residence Life or Housing Office.

If your school does not require students to sign a contract to live in campus housing, it is probably wise to consult with someone before you move out. Start by talking with a member of the Residence Life or Housing staff. This person should be able to advise you about the preferred procedure. It is important to get a contract release or other clearance to move out from the school, so that you don't end up

DORMMATES– LIVING WITH OTHERS CAN BE TOUGH

getting billed for housing. If Residence Life or Housing will not grant you a release and you still feel it is in your best interest, you may want to:

- a.) Ask your parents to call the school
- b.) Ask to talk with someone higher in the school's organizational structure (for example, a Dean of Students, Vice President for Student Affairs, President, or Chancellor)
- c.) Talk with a lawyer. (This should only be used as a last resort.)

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Parenting Is Tough – Make It Easy

By Nadia Alvino

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Raising children and being a good parent is tough, you need every bit of information that you can find to help you develop effective parenting techniques and to make parenting easier. You need a resource that contains parenting tips and advice that will help develop your parenting skills. I have produced a practical, high quality, professionally edited ebook titled " Parenting is Tough ! " that contains all the expert parenting advice that you will need to develop effective parenting skills. This ebook outlines many helpful parenting tips that will enable you to raise good, happy, confident and resilient kids. This easy to read ebook will teach you how to bond with your children and how together you can create a loving, happy relationship that will get stronger and stronger as your children become teenagers, young adults and then as they become parents themselves. More info on this ebook is available at: www.goodhappykids.com

I am an experienced child care professional, parenting consultant, author and pshychologist.



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