

SHARING SPACE and ROOMMATE SUCCESS TIPS

For many students, having a roommate in college will be the first time that they have had to share their space. It is a time that each student learns how his or her behavior and actions affect others, both positive and negative. We encourage each student to be open and flexible while learning about themselves and others. The college roommate experience can be one of the toughest yet rewarding times in your student's college career. We ask you as parents to partner with us to help your student learn and grow.

Your student will learn to set limits, hold others accountable, and to be held accountable. College involves learning, growing and changing inside and outside of the classroom. The roommate experience can be an invaluable part of this education. It will take effort, energy, and a healthy dose of understanding. The roommate relationship is like any other relationship – it requires mutual respect, understanding, common goals/expectations, and the ability to laugh and have fun with each other. To help you prepare for your student for living with a roommate, we have put together some tips and guidelines for conflict resolution. Always remember that your child will be figuring out who they are as an adult and exploring his or her identity at Lynn University.

HELP YOUR STUDENT THINK ABOUT WHAT MATTERS

It's important for your son or daughter to understand what he or she cares about. Help him/her think honestly about himself. Some good questions for your child to answer are: Are you a private person or a social butterfly? Do you avoid conflict or love the debate? What do you need to do to be academically successful? Do you care about who uses your things? Are you willing to change some of your current habits? What are your habits? Are you flexible with others? What values do you want to live by? Answering these questions should help your child sort out how he/she lives. Finally, it's important to think about what he or she wants to get out this experience living in a residence hall with a roommate and floormates.

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS

It's easy for your son or daughter to search for his or her new roommate on Facebook and automatically think about who they are based on the photos or "Info" section. Encourage your child to get to know the person and not the profile of the new roommate. There are many things that can only be conveyed in person. AND, remember that there are going to be changes while at college. It's important to give each other time to get to know each other. So many students are quick to quit, don't let your student be that person! Help your student keep an open mind.

GETTING ASSISTANCE

Problems are inevitable when people are sharing a living space. How your student responds to these conflicts will be the determining factor of navigating the roommate relationship. Avoiding conflicts (or ignoring them) is not recommended, and we cannot help without knowing what is going on. Your student is viewed as an adult to us in Housing and Residence Life; therefore we will expect maturity and will help your student figure out how to respond to conflict. Our staff members are present to assist as coaches by helping to set parameters and mediate conflicts. Students should feel free to ask for assistance from these staff members at any time.

If your student needs assistance, encourage him or her to contact the RA first, and if necessary, the Community Advisor or Area Coordinator. If your student calls you with a concern about a roommate, here are some helpful tips to share:

- Be sure to have the facts, not what you think happened.
- Talk about it sooner rather than later. The longer you wait to confront the problem the worse it can become.
- When you talk about a tough situation expect some defensiveness, it's a natural response. Stay calm but be careful not to accuse your roommate – that will just build walls.
- Give your roommate an opportunity to think about what you have said.
- Don't check with everyone else on the floor before you give feedback to your roommate – that can be seen as gossiping.
- Speak in terms of “me” and not “we” – it's not appropriate to talk about anyone but yourself.
- Often roommates have concerns with each other – and that might come out in your discussion. Be ready to hear that your roommate has issues with you too.
- Talk face to face. Leaving a note or email can lead to misinterpretation.
- Anger is just adds fuel. You will get better results by remaining calm and rational.
- Think ahead of time about what you are going to say and a possible solution.
- Not doing anything is an option but then you must accept the consequences of choosing no action.
- To be heard, you need to listen.

It is important that students address these issues on their own. We understand that you may be tempted to take care of the problem for them by contacting Housing and Residence Life staff, the roommate, or the roommate's family, this will not help your student learn how to deal with similar situations in the future. Also, if you feel you must intervene in some way, we ask that you not do so without your student knowing that you are going to get involved. In almost all cases, in order for a successful resolution to the situation, your student must be included in the resolution.

We welcome contact from parents who want to discuss issues. We will happily talk about what steps we can take to help remedy the situation. It is important that students address these issues on their own. We understand that you may be tempted to take care of the problem for them by contacting Housing and Residence Life staff, the roommate, or the roommate's family, this will not help your student learn how to deal with similar situations in the future. Also, if you feel you must intervene in some way, we ask that you not do so without your student knowing that you are going to get involved. In almost all cases, in order for a successful resolution to the situation, your student must be included in the resolution. Remember that we want your student to learn from this experience and your son or daughter will need to take an active role in resolving the problem.

Housing and Residence Life will not move students until we have as much information as possible and all roommates are able to give their side of the issue. Our staff members are well trained in conflict mediation and can educate students on appropriate assertiveness, listening skills, and communication skills. We want your student to let us know what is going on – please don't assume a staff member knows about your situation if your child has not spoken with an RA about it. When parents call with a concern, we generally share this information with their student. Asking us not to tell your student you called limits our ability to resolve a situation. We are here to help and are invested in your student's education and satisfaction with Lynn University.