

# Roommate Conflicts: Confrontation, Communication & Mediation

Living with roommates is not always easy. Sharing a living space may be stressful and conflicts may arise. Sometimes situations that work at the beginning of the season become more difficult as time goes on; remember that you and your roommate(s) will be constantly growing and changing in your time at JHMR's Employee Housing. It is perfectly normal to have roommate conflicts. In fact, there is a great deal to be learned from handling a difficult situation maturely, respectfully, and creatively.

JHMR Employee Housing offers the following as resource to residents facing roommate conflicts or other issues. Please read through the information below on Roommate Confrontation, Communication and Mediation. If you feel you need further advice on how to proceed with the situation, you should speak with Human Resources.

## Confrontation with your roommate(s)

Communication sometimes breaks down leading to confrontation and you may have to approach your roommate with an issue that one of you has with the other. If this happens then it is helpful to have some idea how you are going to go about it with maturity and respect.

### How to tell there is an issue:

- Your roommate may not want to talk to you, may leave the room when you enter, or may be complaining to friends about you.
- Your roommate may become annoyed with you over little things.
- If you start to notice these things you should not ignore them. If a problem is addressed early, there is a better chance of it being worked out amicably.

### How to address the issue:

- Approach your roommate in private.
- Confirm that this is a good time for both of you to talk. If one of you feels rushed or blindsided, they will be less able to communicate effectively.
- Be direct. Discuss the issue regarding behaviors rather than personality traits. This tactic is less likely to put your roommate on the defensive.
- Be patient. Listen to your roommate and remember that there are two sides to every story.
- Each person should be given a chance to present what they feel the problem really is.
- Review the Roommate Etiquette Agreement document together. Which of your guidelines are working and which of them need to be reconsidered?
- Remember that a solution will probably involve each person giving something and getting something. The solution may not be your ideal scenario, but it should be an improvement on the current state of things.

## Communicating with your Roommate(s)

Most roommate conflicts are the result of miscommunication or, in some cases, a total lack of communication. If you can communicate effectively, it will be much easier to develop a comfortable living environment for yourself and your roommates.

### These tips should help you communicate in a healthy way with your roommate:

- Talk to your roommate directly when something is bothering you. Do not discuss it behind their back because this can cause a breakdown in trust between you.
- Be direct. Be clear about what is bothering you. If you do not tell your roommate that there is a problem, they will not be able to do anything about it.

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- Remember that communication works two ways: talking and listening. Neither one is effective without the other.
- If you create a win-win situation, then the conflict is more likely to be resolved. Evaluate the needs of both sides before a solution is proposed and make sure the solution is acceptable to both parties.
- Respect each other's differences. Everyone has different values, lifestyles, expectations, and communication styles. Get to know each other and establish common ground. It is easier to solve a problem with a friend than a stranger.
- If you are upset with your roommate, chances are that they are upset with you as well. Being involved in a dialogue means that you need to be able to listen and give everyone a chance to speak. Criticism is bound to happen, and your natural reaction is going to be to criticize back, but that is only going to compound the problem. Learning to accept criticism is going to help you communicate and live with your roommate.
- If you both find that you are approaching the limit and things are not being resolved, agree to take some time away from the discussion to give you each time to process what is going on. This will also give you each time to develop feedback that is not going to be hurtful and will not be fueled by anger.

### Roommate Mediations

In difficult discussions, such as roommate conflicts, it is very helpful to have an unbiased third party to help mediate the discussion. We believe that Roommate Mediations are so beneficial, that tenants are required to complete a roommate mediation if they cannot resolve the issues between themselves before they can request a room/unit transfer. All tenants experiencing roommate conflicts are strongly encouraged to participate in a mediation.

### **How Mediations Work**

1. Contact the Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-999-1077. Company Code: EAPNOW. This is free, confidential counseling for a wide variety of personal problems, issues, and concerns for employees. Explain the situation you are having with your roommate(s) and to request some help with resolving the issue.
2. All roommates involved will need to find a time that works best for everyone to discuss the issues. It is very important that you allow enough time for each person to express themselves and to come up with a solution.
3. Even if you are the person who contacts the EAP, remember that they have a responsibility to the well-being of all their advisees. EAP will give each person a chance to be heard and they will encourage a solution that is beneficial to all parties.
4. Remember, although the EAP has trained counselors, they are not a magician. Some roommate conflicts require several mediations before they find a solution. In the worst cases, you may find that the situation is not working even after you have all made an honest attempt at mediation. In those cases, and only in those cases, a room/unit transfer may be the best solution.

\*The On-Site Supervisor and Property Manager are there for any maintenance issues with your unit and cannot to resolve roommate conflicts. Each resident has an individual responsibility to work through any issues within their unit\*