



# MY STUDENT IS IN A ROOMMATE CONFLICT NOW WHAT?

- ▶ Roommate conflicts are very stressful for your student, for you as a parent, and also for the university staff that are involved in helping your student resolve their conflict(s). Although living with a new person may be at times challenging for your student, it also provides terrific opportunities to learn and acquire life-long skills that relate to communication, negotiation, assertiveness, tolerance and patience. The Office of Residential Life and Housing Services staff understand that living situations aren't always ideal. Parents can be very helpful in their student's transition to having an enjoyable roommate relationship.

## TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR STUDENT THROUGH A ROOMMATE CONFLICT



**Recognize that this is your student's problem, not your problem to solve.** It's understandable that as a parent you may be inclined to help your student by solving the problem for them, but students learn assertiveness, communication, and problem-solving skills if they work through the problem rather than being "rescued".

Once your student explains the conflict, ask if it could be a misunderstanding instead of any intentional dispute.

- ▶ Ask if they are simply venting or if they need your assistance in finding a solution.
- ▶ Inquire if your student completed a Living Agreement. The Living Agreement is a great way to get students talking about their expectations for the room. If they have, it may be helpful for them to review it since it can be easy to forget what they originally agreed to.
- ▶ Ask whether the roommates involved have had a sit-down, face-to-face talk about the issue. Have they utilized the steps in THRIVE (T – Talk to your roommate, H – Hear all sides of the story, R – Reflect on your responsibility, I – Initiate "I" Statements, V – Visualize a mutually beneficial solution, E – Express your needs not your wants). Many students today would rather communicate through email, social media and text messaging. Without the benefit of facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, messages can be misunderstood. Encourage your student to remember that roommate conflicts take time and require ongoing communication.
- ▶ Help your student brainstorm multiple options for resolution. Coming to a successful resolution requires compromise on the parts of all concerned.
- ▶ Share your own experiences with conflict and how you successfully navigated differences. It is good for your student to hear how you have experienced conflicts and what you did to resolve them, but balance this with an understanding that the discussion is about your student, not you.
- ▶ Remind your student that any conflict has two sides. Encourage your student to consider why their roommate might see the situation from a different point of view. Don't be afraid to question whether your student may have played a role in creating the conflict. Let them know you're not criticizing – only suggesting self-examination.
- ▶ If the students are unsuccessful in problem solving face-to-face, encourage your student to seek out the assistance of their Resident Assistant (RA), Resident Hall Director (RHD), or Resident Hall Assistant Director (RHAD). Residential Life staff can assist in mediating their conflict further. In reality, most students wait to mention there's a problem until they want to move out or they report it to their RA expecting that person to solve it. Counseling and Wellness Services is also available to help your student learn to cope with stress and find other ways to manage the situation. They can be reached at 212-443-9999.



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- ▶ Encourage your student to whole-heartedly pursue other means of conflict resolution before considering requesting a new room. More often than not, students can successfully work through roommate problems.

## ❗ DO NOT BECOME PERSONALLY INVOLVED! ALLOW YOUR STUDENT TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT.

# THE ROOMMATE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS AT NYU



We want to partner with you in your student's success while at NYU. We will work with roommates to find the source of the conflict and suggest solutions and provide feedback to help students reach a mutually beneficial agreement. Keep in mind that both your student and their roommate(s) have rights and that the Residential Life staff will be working to maintain the rights of all parties involved.

### ▶ **When a roommate conflict is reported**

If a student reports a roommate conflict and they have already tried to resolve it on their own, the RA will first spend time visiting with each roommate individually to assess the situation and hear the varying perspectives. If the roommate conflict involves a policy violation, we have a process in place to respond accordingly.

### ▶ **Completing the Living Agreement**

If the roommates have not completed the Living Agreement, the RA will suggest that they discuss their specific concerns in the context of completing it, which lists common areas for disagreement and sets expectations. If the roommates have already completed the Living Agreement, the RA will facilitate a discussion regarding whether there are areas for revision, sources of current conflicts, and possible resolutions. Students will have an opportunity to share their "stories" and to brainstorm options for resolution. It is crucial for students to be honest, direct, and flexible during this time to reach a mutually agreeable solution. Roommates will sign the agreement acknowledging their willingness to abide by and hold each other accountable for the agreement. \*\*If the new agreement is not working: The RA will attempt to facilitate another conversation, or may ask professional staff for assistance in mediating the ongoing roommate dispute.

### ▶ **Resident Hall Director (RHD)/Resident Hall Assistant Director (RHAD) intervention & room changes**

If the roommate conflict rises to the level of the RHD/RHAD, a mediation meeting with the roommates may be held to assess the potential for resolution prior to suggesting a room change (if there is a space available). Splitting up may be the best solution; however, it is often difficult to determine who should move to the new room and who should remain in the current room. The best option is for the roommates to decide themselves. However, when that fails, the following options exist: application dates, flipping a coin, or one roommate decides to move out. If a decision cannot be made both roommates may be required to move. After the decision, the RHD/RHAD will attempt to find a new room for the student moving based on preferences (room type or floor). In some instances the RHD/RHAD will have no options and will move the student to whatever space is available at the time if there are any. Students are then given a specific time period during which they are to complete the move.

### ▶ **Avoiding another roommate conflict**

The RA and RHD/RHAD may work with both roommates to reflect on what happened and what could have been done differently to avoid the need to move rooms. It is important for the students to learn from this experience so as not to repeat it with their new roommate.

### ▶ **Contacting the Resident Hall Director yourself**

Talk to your student first before you call the RHD or another Residential Life staff. Note: your student may not appreciate you calling without their knowledge. In addition, familiarize yourself with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA does not allow Residential Life staff to discuss specific details of the student's roommate conflict, conduct incidents, or personal concerns with their parent without a signed waiver from the student. However, the RHD will be happy to review with you the overall process in which we help students work through conflicts. Your student is your information source if you want conflict specifics, so talk to them. Just keep in mind; they only have one side to the story.

## ❗ WE WANT STUDENTS TO HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE EXPERIENCE IN THE RESIDENTIAL HALLS AT NYU!