

Roommate Conflict Mediation for Parents



How can a parent help with their student's roommate conflict?

As adults, we know that conflicts and disagreements are expected even in the strongest relationships. As a parent or family member, you may have heard from your student about their overall roommate experience, things they do or don't like about them, and even potential roommate conflicts. While it may feel natural to want to intervene on your student's behalf, this is an excellent opportunity to support your student in learning how to address and resolve conflict independently!

The Office of Housing and Residence Life ask students to meet with their roommate each year to complete a roommate agreement. A roommate agreement walks roommate pairs through multiple questions to discuss with one another based on the common sources of conflict we see between roommates.

In August during opening floor meetings Resident Assistants met with their residents and provided the following tips to your student for completing the roommate agreement (these tips are reinforced by RAs consistently) :

- **Be specific:** Instead of vague statements like "we'll be respectful of each other," specify what that means to you. For example, do you agree on a quiet time after 10 pm?
- **Be flexible:** Things don't always go according to plan, so be willing to adjust your agreement as needed. Be willing to discuss and be flexible, even during a conflict with your roommate. Your RA or A/RC can assist with this!
- **Be open to compromise:** Some people will have different expectations, and your shared space has to be comfortable for both parties. Be willing to meet in the middle.
- If you and your roommate need assistance facilitating a conversation with your roommate, reach out to your RA!

Residence Halls Staff @ SLU:

Resident Assistant:

Peer leader who live on the floor with students to build community and provide support.

Graduate Hall Coordinator:

Graduate Student who live in the community to assist with community building, crisis management and student support.

Residence Hall Coordinator:

Professional staff who live in the community and oversees all operations of the building such as programming, crisis management, student conduct, etc.



As a trusted partner in your student's education and Saint Louis University experience, here are some tips to help them navigate issues and conflicts with their roommate:

Encourage Them to Talk It Out: In many roommate conflicts, a student's roommate may not know there is an issue until their roommate asks to move out. Provide strategies for having a dialogue with their roommate and encourage them to name the problems they are having and their needs respectfully.

Encourage Compromise: Just like in every other relationship or environment, it's rare that they can get 100% of what they want. Please encourage them to seek compromise and work with their roommate to seek win-win solutions.

Be Willing to Challenge Your Student: Often, in roommate conflicts, both parties have intentionally or unintentionally contributed to the dynamics in their shared space. As your student talks with you about all the horrible things their roommate has done, be willing to challenge and encourage them to reflect on their potential role in the conflict.

Avoid the temptation to intervene: As your student's most prominent advocate and supporter, it is natural for you to want to email Student Development at SLU to remove the source of stress for your student. Instead, it's best to encourage your student to work through the conflict first before you step in. This helps them learn how to resolve conflict with others when you're not there.

Ask Them About What They've Done to Resolve It: Students may talk to you because they want to vent about the situation, or they secretly (or maybe not so secretly) want you to intervene on their behalf. Instead, we encourage you to walk your students through the steps they have (or have yet to) taken to resolve the situation. Some questions you can ask include:

- Have you spoken to your roommate?
 - How did that conversation go?
 - OR should you speak to your roommate about your concerns??
- Have you and your roommate completed the roommate agreement that HRL sent you?
- Have you reached out to your RA to help mediate or give advice?
- Have you reached out to the Residence Coordinator?

Consult with Housing and Residence Life Staff: We are happy to help walk parents and families through how to have these conversations with their students and support them through their roommate conflicts! These calls also give us a heads-up to check in with your student and their roommate intentionally.

College is ripe with many opportunities for students to develop meaningful and life-long relationships; their relationship with their roommate can be most important. Partnering with your student and with HRL to make their roommate experience a success will be something they will fondly look back on for years to come.

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