

Resolving Conflicts

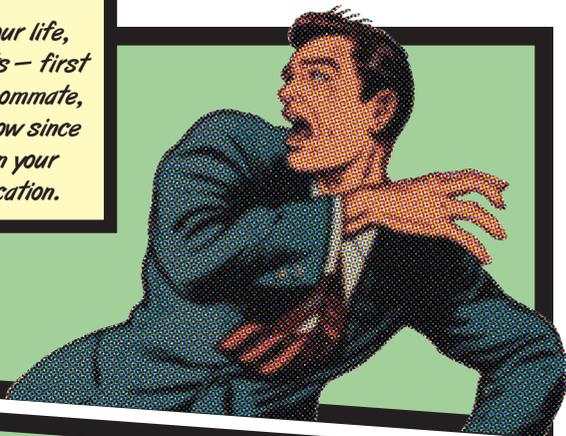
TESTS, PAPERS, RESEARCH PROJECTS, FIGURING WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IN LIFE – THOSE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THE HARDEST PARTS OF COLLEGE, RIGHT?

BY LAURA HAYES

POW!



College is a new chapter in your life, and often a time of many firsts — first long term relationship, first roommate, first friend that you didn't know since kindergarten or even first in your family to pursue higher education.



With this new time in your life, comes a buttload of new challenges. What do you do when your roommate goes to bed at 8 p.m. and you like to burn the midnight oil? What happens when you're paired with someone for a group project and they refuse to do anything besides the bare minimum?



What happens when you're suddenly on the outs with your best friend since freshman year?

Friends and significant others are supposed to be there to help you through it all, but what happens when those relationships add even more stress to your plate?

What do you do?

"At worst-case scenario, it can affect their ability to attend class and be successful," said Mary Prescott, the assistant director of community outreach and education at counseling services.

Anxiety from an unhealthy living situation can spread through all parts of your life and lead to difficulty concentrating and being uncomfortable in your living space.

There are common conflicts that she's seen — with roommates, friends or romantic partners — but how conflicts are managed with them may be different, but with similar approaches.

Don't let the snowball start rolling

Maybe your roommate didn't mean to leave their dirty clothes in front of your closet or clean out the microwave when their spaghetti explodes. Maybe they will clean it up next time.

"Addressing a behavior when you see it makes it much easier, or if you start to feel like, 'I hate going back to my dorm room,' well, let's deal with it right now," Prescott said.

How do you communicate?

Do you like to talk it out? Or would you rather hide underneath a cocoon of blankets until the issue magically disappeared?

“Very few people know how to effectively communicate,” Prescott said.

For some freshmen, the only people they have had to share a living space with is their family members, and how you were raised can influence how you deal with conflict and what might be future issues. For example, do you wash your dishes immediately after eating or do you leave them to “soak” for anywhere from one day to one week?

“We don’t want it to get to the point where somebody feels like they have to move out, and that happens sheerly because people don’t communicate early on and don’t manage what their expectations are,” Prescott said.

Consider talking it out

Instead of spam texting or subtweeting your friends or roommate when you’re upset, consider sitting down with a CAPS staff member or an RA to talk through the issue.

How do you handle conflict versus your roommate or friend? What is going on with the other person? What message do you want to get across?

Sometimes, the issue may be how an action is interpreted. If your friend ignored you while walking across campus, maybe they were distracted or didn’t see you. Honestly.

Talking with CAPS, staff can model way to communicate and resolve the conflict.



Own your feelings

“You can say anything you want, you just can’t say it in any way you want,” Prescott said.

Identify what emotion you were feeling. Try to use “I” statements when talking through issues.

Instead of saying, “You always make me feel left out when your other friends are around,” try, “I really feel ignored when your other are around.”



Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) offers “CAPS Chat” on Tuesdays from 12-1:30 p.m. at the library in room 305, which is an informal, drop in consultation for issues like roommate problems and relationship issues.

CAPS phone number: (717) 948-6025