

JUST HOW MUCH CAN A CONFLICT IMPACT YOUR SCHOOL SUCCESS?

Ok, we know academic researchers will have fits if we string all this data together, but when you consider those findings, it's hard not to tie it in with this number:

According to the use news and world repost, "30% of college and university students drop out after their first year."

That's huge. But is there a relationship between all of this data? Does a roommate problem cause a student to drop out of school?

You can't draw that conclusion from the data, but you can make the case that it contributes to stress, and stress is a big impediment for success.

The corrective action is then clear, right? Reduce roommate conflict, and you improve the chance for success. That's easier said than done, especially for college freshmen and sophomores.

SOLUTIONS TO ROOMMATE PROBLEMS

First, let's make sure you understand the improper way to deal with conflict.

- You can't cave in, and give your roommate whatever they want.
- You can't ignore the issue entirely.
- You can't dig in your heels and refuse to compromise.

We know for a fact those methods don't work. So what does?

The following methods aren't designed for each of the specific issues we listed at the beginning of the post. We're going to describe how to solve conflict in general. Because if you know how to solve a problem, then the nature of the problem won't matter. That's why our list starts with:

1. UNDERSTAND HOW YOU RESOLVE CONFLICT

We want to resolve conflict on our own first and foremost. That can be done, but only if you and your roommate are aware of how you deal with conflict. When you understand your personal conflict resolution style, then you can figure out how to handle problems.

For example, people who avoid confrontation will only deal with conflict in a controlled environment, usually with a mediator present. Someone who is more confrontational can't be argued with: Instead, resolution with the person needs to be a win-win situation.

To identify how you resolve conflict. It has a scoring system to help you self-evaluate.

2. DO NOT GO IT ALONE

Knowing your own conflict resolution style is a great first step. But many people, especially freshmen and sophomores, need a little extra help.

As the studies indicated, the chances of resolving conflict nearly triple when some sort of mediation is used. That number will be influenced by the effectiveness of your mediator, but it's definitely the direction you want to take.

Research done by Robert Rodgers of Ohio State University in 1983 shows how successful a mediator can be. "Control or resolution of roommate conflicts was achieved in 67% of the cases using mediation, compared to 25% for a comparison group using regular methods."

3. DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS UPFRONT

Knowing your own conflict-resolution style and the type of issues that prompt roomie problems should enable you to be proactive.

Don't wait until problems occur. Set up guidelines beforehand. How will you handle food sharing? How will you deal with paying the rent (if you're on a shared lease)? Go through the list of conflicts and talk about the issues while you're calm, not when there's a problem.

It's ideal if these issues are handled before you even move in. Heck, you may want to take a swing at them (a figurative, not a literal swing) BEFORE you even sign the lease. Best to see if there will be a problem before anyone signs the bottom line.

4. KEEP TALKING – BUT ONLY FACE-TO-FACE (NO SUBTWEETING! EVER!)

The lines of communication must stay open, as we've noted in this post. Good listening skills and a good attitude are paramount to solving a problem.

Do NOT try to solve an issue using text, subtweet (social media) or email. People get overly bold, aggressive and downright mean when they don't have to deal with a person face-to-face.

Even if the best-intended messages can be misconstrued when you're dealing with sensitive topics. Keep talking, but keep it face-to-face. Check out this [recentsubtweeting nightmare](#) as proof of what happens when you don't.

5. DON'T ASPIRE TO BE BEST FRIENDS — BE BEST ROOMMATES

This is often an issue with freshmen and sophomores, who arrive at college thinking they'll become best of buddies with their roommate. Unfortunately, that's often not the case.

The key here is to recognize that just because you're not great friends doesn't mean you can't be great roommates. You can each have your own set of mutual friends, but what's important is that the two of you co-exist as roommates. That means you respect each other and are mindful of things that can cause the other person stress.

IN-DEPTH: AVOIDING BEST FRIEND ROOMMATE PROBLEMS

Most roommates mistakenly think that if they line up with someone that's like-minded, who has the same interests, friends, etc., that no conflict would potentially arise.

But conflict is inevitable. People are just too different for it not to occur. The roommate problems begin — even between best friends — because you don't understand how to handle the conflict after it occurs.

It's why complete strangers make better roommates than long-standing friends: You may not be best buds, but you can resolve problems to avoid becoming big enemies.