

LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Community is about connections. When you connect with the people and experiences around you, your community becomes so much more than “just a place to live.” It becomes a home.

Living in community can be a real highlight of your college career. When you live with other people, you connect by sharing the conversations and tasks of daily life. When you engage in interesting discussions and get along well, this feels great. At other times, it may be tougher, like when you have a disagreement and need to find a resolution.

Overall, getting connected is at the heart of making your community experience a positive one.

THE LANGUAGE OF COMMUNITY

Whether you live in an apartment, house, suite or family housing, your community holds a lot of promise. This is your chance to live with interesting, diverse people and learn from one another. In order to make it work, make sure the following words are part of your community vocabulary...

- ◆ Connect
- ◆ Engage
- ◆ Communicate
- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Contribute
- ◆ Care

Good Neighbors

Part of connecting with others is being a good neighbor. You do so when you...

- **Engage in Conversation.**
Taking the extra five minutes to catch up with neighbors on the sidewalk, in the laundry room or around campus is time well spent!
- **Lend a Hand.**
Jumping someone’s car battery, loaning out a book or offering to help a neighbor with a class project are all easy ways to be neighborly.
- **Share Skills.**
Maybe you’re good at fixing glitchy laptops and the person next door is a great cook. Why not swap services?
- **Be Respectful.**
Keeping your music down and guests under control so they don’t disrupt your neighbors’ sleep or study habits is important. Thinking about how your actions can impact others is the best way to be respectful.



A big part of the connection with members of your community is engaging. You can engage in conversation, a game of volleyball or a group program. Going beyond surface level interactions is a good place to start.

10 Rules of Community Engagement

In order to reap the benefits of community life...

1. Respect Others.

Respect their space, their interests, their right to express opinions, their feelings and their lives.

2. Show Genuine Interest.

Give everyone a chance and don't make assumptions — someone may surprise you!

3. Take Initiative.

Introduce yourself, ask friendly questions, and initiate conversations and activities.

4. Learn & Use Names.

It feels like someone cares when a new person remembers your name. Right?

5. Take Responsibility.

Admit mistakes, make amends, and take responsibility for your surroundings and your behavior.

6. Be Inclusive.

Let your language and your actions serve to *include* rather than *exclude*.

OFFERING A WARM WELCOME

When someone new moves into your community, make every effort to welcome that person by:

- ◆ Stopping by to introduce yourself
- ◆ Introducing them to others in the community
- ◆ Bringing them a cup of coffee
- ◆ Offering to show them around the building/campus/community
- ◆ Sharing things you've learned about the community
- ◆ Inviting them to dinner
- ◆ *Including* them!

7. Offer Assistance.

When someone is in need, lend a supportive hand.

8. Confront with Care.

Don't accuse or abuse — ask respectful questions and work together to resolve problems.

9. Cooperate & Compromise.

Think of the common good and how your actions impact the community as a whole.

10. Contribute.

Share your time, your talents and your assistance. The community is better because you are here!

In this digital age, we're all so focused on our screens that we sometimes forget about personal interactions. Looking someone in the eye, having an in-person conversation and really tuning in to another person goes a long way. It doesn't mean there's no benefit to technological communication. Instead, it's all about balance.

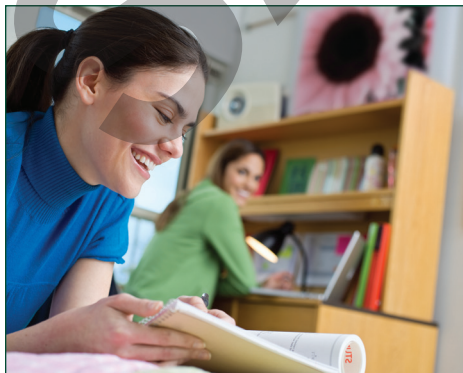
Communicating with those you live with is the key to making this communal living thing work. Whether it's texting someone an invitation to dinner, confronting someone caringly about a behavior of concern or addressing a conflict before it blows up, clear communication makes it all work.

Handling Conflict

It's impossible for things to go right all of the time, especially when a diverse group of people is living together in community. Yet, you *can* prepare for conflict by keeping the following things in mind:

- **Don't Play the Blame Game.**

Gather the facts first instead of automatically accusing someone. You'll save a lot of time, hassle and misunderstanding this way.



- **Use "I" Statements.**

Let people know how their actions impact you. Saying, "I can't study when your music is turned up" will make someone a lot less defensive than saying, "You distract me *constantly* with your loud music."

- **Steer Clear of Assumptions.**

It's easy to assume something about someone or go based on what others say. Yet, assumptions are rarely accurate and just contribute to further misunderstandings. Don't give in to them.

MANAGING CONFLICT

- ◆ Listen to what the other person has to say.
- ◆ Keep calm and under control — shouting doesn't help anything.
- ◆ Compromise but don't be so flexible that you bend too much.
- ◆ Let the other person know what's on your mind, calmly.
- ◆ Get help from a campus faculty or staff member if you're unable to resolve the issue on your own.

Treating fellow community members with respect takes multiple forms. You can respect their beliefs, ideas and viewpoints, even if they differ from yours. You can respect their right to sleep and study by being quiet when you come home late at night. And you can respect their way of doing things, while learning something in the process.

Nix the Rumor Mill

When people live in a close-knit community, the rumor mill often presents information that is disrespectful, inaccurate and potentially harmful. Steer clear by not making people's lives and situations the topic of your "small talk" with others. Try to make your own impressions about people rather than automatically believing what someone tells you. And, remember not to talk behind other people's backs — go directly to the source if an issue comes up!

Strengthen Your Community

Respect is what strengthens a community and makes it more than just a bunch of people living in the same place. In a strong, respectful community, people make an effort to...

- Get in touch with new ideas, people and experiences
- Be honest and take responsibility
- Embrace differences & seek out commonality
- Agree to disagree
- Explore their values
- Take pride
- Develop as individuals and group members
- Take chances
- Work toward the common good

IN AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY...

- ◆ People of all abilities, religions, cultures, ages, sexual orientations, genders, images, lifestyles and races are welcomed
- ◆ Getting to know people's multiple layers is the norm
- ◆ Biased comments are addressed with care and concern
- ◆ People discuss their differences rather than allowing them to drive a wedge between neighbors
- ◆ People don't assume things about others
- ◆ Humor based on humiliation of another person or group is unacceptable
- ◆ People learn from one another's different traditions and practices
- ◆ Holidays and holy days of all sorts are celebrated
- ◆ Community decorations are welcoming and inviting

A community is only as strong as its membership. If you sit back and wait for things to happen in your community, chances are you'll be disappointed. However, if you dig in and contribute to your community, everyone benefits!



How You Benefit from Community Involvement

- Studies show that students who get involved outside the classroom tend to do better in school and stay to finish their degrees
- You meet a wider variety of people through involvement
- Your ownership and pride in the community increases
- You enhance your sense of belonging — this community is a place that *you* helped to create!

How the Community Benefits from Your Involvement

- When multiple people with multiple skills get involved, the results are bound to meet more people's needs
- A wider group of people gets to benefit from your special talents
- More positive things occur within the community when there's more help to be had
- Your perspective and suggestions help to improve the community around you

TAKE ACTION

- ♦ **Speak Up.** When something needs doing, speak out. Don't just wait for someone else to do it — take charge!
- ♦ **Tackle Problems.** If a sink is leaking, report it. If a bulletin board needs to be updated, offer to help. Help make your living environment the best that it can be.
- ♦ **Organize.** If something is important to you, bring people together and make it happen.
- ♦ **Respect the Space.** Simple actions like picking up stray papers and recycling are contagious. Plus, your community will just *look* a whole lot better!
- ♦ **Treat Others Well.** When people are respectful, kind and interested in one another, a sense of pride just naturally builds. Treat people as you'd like to be treated and your actions will have a positive influence.

In a true community, people look out for one another's well-being and safety. Consider how you can be part of this proactive approach to community care.

Look Out for One Another

• Don't Prop Doors.

There have been too many examples of someone with harmful intentions sneaking in a propped door.

• Err on the Side of Caution.

If someone looks suspicious, report it. There's something to be said for trusting your instincts.

• Lock It Up.

Unlocked doors are an invitation to thieves or to someone intending to do harm.

• Get to Know Officers.

Stop and chat with the officers in your community. A stronger relationship will help when you're in trouble or have questions.

• Support Staff Members.

When staffers enforce policies and procedures, it's because they want to keep your community safe! So, support them and the rules — it's *definitely* in your best interest.

• Walk Together.

Work together to make sure fellow community members aren't walking alone at night or in isolated areas.

PAY ATTENTION

Paying attention to the "little things" is sometimes the best way to keep yourself and others safe. So, keep an eye out for:

- ◆ **Windows that don't lock** — someone could climb in
- ◆ **Broken glass in a certain area** — someone could get cut
- ◆ **Leaking water sources** — someone's belongings could be damaged or someone could slip
- ◆ **Fire equipment that's not working** — someone could require that equipment to stay safe in a fire
- ◆ **Loose doors** — someone could slip in and do harm when a door doesn't latch properly

And there's more! Pay attention to your surroundings and you'll be helping to ensure a safer, more secure community.



LIVING IN COMMUNITY=

- Lend a hand • Be inclusive • Make connections
 - Take a chance on people • Have face-to-face conversations •
 - Go beyond simply asking, “How are you?” • Support dreams •
- Keep the noise down • Talk in the laundry room • Trust •
- When you’re cooking, make extra and share •
- Take someone’s trash out • Welcome new neighbors •
 - Help people move in or move out • Don’t just keep to yourself •
 - Invite people in • Mix it up: message, tweet & talk face-to-face •
 - Hold community celebrations • Get to know people’s names •
- Embrace diversity • Revel in mutual respect •
 - Swap skills so that everyone benefits • Keep people in mind •
 - Share kind words & your time • Do a favor • Take walks together •
- Go to the source — don’t go behind someone’s back •
- Have community meals • Beautify your surroundings
 - Listen to what others have to say • Organize to get things done •
- Celebrate people’s accomplishments • Resolve conflicts •
- Recognize everyone’s contributions • Speak up •
 - Lead at times, follow at others • Sit outside together •
 - Learn from exposure to new people and new ways of thought •
 - Be approachable: turn off your phone now & then •
 - Leave your community better than it was when you first arrived •
 - Support common goals • Respect differing opinions •
 - Confront with compassion and care • Draw people into the fold •
- Be an active participant • Become “community-minded” •
 - Care... and let it show.

~ Julie Phillips