

Transcript Episode 4: When Worlds Collide- Getting Along with Roommates and Coworkers

Intro: Adulting – Thinking of all the things adults have to do can be intimidating. Maybe you are realizing just how much you don't know about living on your own. If this sounds familiar, join us today to learn the skills you need and take some of the stress out of being an adult.

This is Grown Up U, an adulting podcast to help you navigate the twists and turns of adult life. Listen and get life skills you didn't learn in school.

Rachel Chaney: Hello Everyone, we're back. Welcome to the Grown Up U podcast. And we're back if you remember our voices. This is Rachel Chaney. I'm the Yell County Family and Consumer Science Agent. Here with me is Pamela Luker, the Pope County Family and Consumer Science Agent. And we're with the University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service. And we're excited to be here for today's segment of Grown Up U. We actually recorded episode one, “The Top Three Tips for Going Back to School or Starting a New Job”. And what's today's topic, Pam?

Pamela Luker: Well, today's topic is getting along with roommates and coworkers. So you're getting started in college or you're beginning a new job. Guess what? Whether it's a dorm room, you're living in an apartment, you're in a cubicle or any kind of workspace type, you will have at least one other person that you'll need to get along with on a daily basis. So that's what we're talking about today.

Rachel Chaney: Yeah, and when we were preparing for this lesson and looking at it, we both had some pretty funny stories about roommates or coworkers that we've worked with over the years. You work with someone long enough day in and day out, there's going to be some things that can happen that may mess up with your productivity at work or happiness about your job. But it when you get along with people, it can increase your overall happiness, satisfaction and productivity.

There's other important benefits of getting along and includes job related stress, reducing that increased health and well-being, improved psychological health, sense of connection, and increased success. So Pam, what can we do to work on

getting along with our roommates and coworkers?

Pamela Luker: Well, my first suggestion would be to be open from day one. So whenever you have a new roommate or start a new job having coworkers, this is the new territory for a lot of people and not everyone will automatically understand what you need or what you expect from them. So you can't just assume and you want to get things off to a good start by first of all, just be friendly too everyone you meet. You want to ask questions and graciously accept help and advice from others.

So I know in certain situations, especially a new job and stuff, sometimes we have those people that want to give you advice and maybe it's something, even though just graciously accept it and go on, because arguing with them is not a way to start your relationship or even if you're in the middle of the rush hour job and at the job for a while, just take it and go on and you can use it or not use it. But a lot of times, if it's someone that's been there, well, just remember, they've been there, done that. And there they really do have your best interest.

And the people that you're sharing a space with will benefit from you being proactive and acknowledging how complicated it might be. So just try to understand their needs, communicate with them, give them your expectations, too when it comes to that. You want to discuss how to make it work, make the conversation fun, where you know where you can and make it as human as possible. For instance, maybe you want to name your office space. Implement a safe word that lets people know you need help or create rules of engagement, maybe even some silly ones included. Now, I know Rachel and talked about office space and things like that at one time. Rachel, you want to give us a little story on that?

Rachel Chaney: Well, I mean, I've I've shared an office before, and so not only was it is kind of not really a cubicle, but we were in a room together sharing an office and trying to figure out ways to make that we respected each other space and everything. And we talked about it. And there would be times that we actually have a sign on our door that we would we needed time to work because we were recording lessons or concentration mode, the other person would try to be respectful of that and be as quiet as possible, or maybe even I would go to another room if I needed a record or whatever, because I understand if I'm doing all day, I can't really stay quiet the whole time. So just communicating that was really

important.

And that kind of goes into the next one will be respectful of your roommate or coworker of their boundaries and different things. Don't your roommate or coworker's food unless they say you can. If you take that last cup of coffee, try to start a fresh pot or brew for it to brew for others who might want or need coffee. If you have a fever, call in sick. And this is definitely important right now with everything that's going on. We don't want to share our illness. Also, don't take credit for someone else's work. I think that's really important and a good way of respectfulness and working together. That's one way to kind of lose it is if you work with someone and you don't even give them credit when the boss is like great job and you don't try to share that that credit with someone else who's working with you, they might not work with you again. Use proper etiquette when emailing or texting, say please when making a request. And of course, you don't have to hit reply all every time. There is a difference between reply and reply all. Sometimes if there are cookies in the break room, we don't need to know that you are planning to come down there and get a cookie. Not everybody needs to know that. So be respectful that we don't want to blow up people's emails.

Don't spread gossip, realize that we all have our weird parts and that's fine. It's what makes us human. What isn't fine is staying silent about them and then blowing it up about something that really isn't a big deal and really just understand trying to put yourself in that person's shoes. You don't really know what's going on. And in some ways, you know, we're all different when we're at work compared to what's going on in our personal life. And there's a boundary there. And so maybe there's something else going on. So just be respectful of their time and what's going on in their life as well.

Pamela Luker: So Rachel, you reminded me. You said don't eat another person's lunch or anything like that. It reminded me of a story I heard the other night about someone getting their lunch taken every day. And so they did something to try to find out who it was. Come to find out it was the boss. And I thought that was a really interesting story.

And it just so happened that last week my husband was telling me that he had shared his lunch with a coworker because he said that a coworker had put their lunch in the refrigerator and that it disappeared. And so he shared his lunch. Well,

the guy was all upset that somebody would do that. Well come to find out, someone was trying to make room for a cake that somebody brought and they had just moved his lunch. And so don't go accusing people. Make sure you know. But yes, be very respectful. And it would have been very respectful and courteous if that coworker that moved his lunch would have told him so he didn't think that someone stole his lunch. But anyway, I thought that was a funny little story and a reminder that we need to be respectful and courteous.

Rachel Chaney: And feel like when you bring food in the mix, there so that's a common story. And I will say for roommates, I saw something recently, it was a video on the Internet, but it was showing like this person had four other roommates and so what they did in the refrigerator is they each had a little box or container in the refrigerator for their food to divide it out. I thought that was a really neat idea that might not be always useful. I think any time I've had roommates or others had entertaining, we try to split everything and split food. So I think that's also where communication is important. And if it's not okay with you, you need to say something because you don't want to blow up. In a lot of times those little things can be fixed immediately. When you don't fix them and you just let them have a slow burn, it'll eventually just blow up. Something else will happen and it just keeps piling on. So communication is really key with your roommate and your coworkers telling to them about what's going on and that being respectful.

But I know one other thing is we live in a world of social media. I know we've talked about this last time in our Episode one. Pam, do we have any tips for coworkers and roommates and with social media?

Pamela Luker: Yes. If you do connect with a coworker through social media, I would suggest you don't engage in any inappropriate relationships and don't present an unprofessional side of yourself. So you want to remember that and you want to keep any controversial interests or hobbies separate from your coworkers. So politics especially recently too, that's something that really you don't want to put out there because you never know. I know even with our with our jobs, you know, we deal with a lot of stakeholders out in the community and we want to be respectful of each other's opinions. And if we're putting down another, let's say, a political party or anything like that, that could really offend them. And we want to make sure that we're all getting along. We're doing we're not putting something out there that's going to put a strain on your relationship with that coworker or business or whatever business relationship you may have with them. So really, really think

about that.

And you really do not absolutely do not want to share confidential information about your company or other workers. So let's say and I know Rachel would never do this, but let's say Rachel and I shared we were at the same office and I brought my lunch and I realized that Rachel had stolen my lunch. I'm not going to go I would go to her and talk to her about it but I'm not going to go to social media and let everybody know how Rachel's just a lunch stealer and she's a horrible person for taking my lunch. But you will see on social media people going off about stuff that, like Rachel was saying, it may have just really wasn't a big deal but you hold it in until finally it is. And then you take it and you publicize it, which we don't need to do. But you want to do is pretend the company president or your boss or your parents are personally following your every move on social media and you want to act accordingly.

Rachel Chaney: And I would say if you're not willing to say it to their face, you shouldn't share it. And I think that also applies not only to social media in general, technology in general. I've been in touch groups with coworkers and stuff, and a lot of times it's fun. Every once and a while you can vent but the thing is that nowadays you can take screenshots of stuff, you can share it then on social media or share it with that boss or whoever they may be talking about. And same with roommates. You share that your roommates are messy and all that. Well, people are going to see that and that roommate now might not want that shared out there. I know we talked about in the first episode how people go out and well that maybe their first impression of you is what you put on social media.

Also, social media use at work, depending on your job, it may have certain restrictions to that. They may not want you on your phone while you're working. And that also is one way to kind of cause some conflict with coworkers is maybe you're needing to get a job done, but you're constantly on your phone or they see you posting something on social media during work hours. It's like, OK, well, what are you really doing at work or are you doing your job or you're doing something you're not supposed to be doing. And I know we all to maybe take a little break, breather, break and stuff like that but social media usage and phone usage at work, just be aware of that.

Which kind of ties into the next one you practice empathy, too. So you want to try to be understanding of your coworkers and roommates. Your coworkers, coworkers and roommates really don't want to hear your personal phone calls. So if you do have to have that personal phone call, go outside or go into your room. If at work, keep your personal calls short, it's always best to avoid bringing up cringeworthy topics such as

religion or politics or your personal life. Clean up after yourself. Your mother is not going to do it for you. Your roomies, your colleagues don't appreciate your mess. And if you're someone who maybe the opposite of that to practice empathy and understanding, maybe the reason their office is a mess is because they've got a lot of stuff going on and that's the last thing that they are worrying about. So I think that goes both ways and understanding with our personal lives.

Sometimes it does kind of bleed into work. So try to practice that. And with roommates, they might have finals all week and that's why they haven't had a chance to wash their dishes or whatever, maybe try to help them out. If you don't have a lot of stuff going on that we, you know. Every once in a while, I've come and I'll put dishes in the sink and somebody else will wash it because I've gotten busy with something and I forgot to wash my dish and I try to do the same thing. If I go in there and there's dishes in the sink and I have a little bit of time, I'll wash the dishes to help them out because someone's helped me out in the past.

What about griping? Everybody vents, right Pam? what would you say? Is there some tips for that, how to handle that at work with your coworkers or maybe griping about your roommate?

Pamela Luker: Well, honestly, it's kind of hard. And whenever you're with your roommate or with your coworker so much of your day not to become friends with them, but we need to be careful because we want to vent to them, because we feel that connection and like and just want somebody to understand. And everyone does vent about the job or parents or significant others at one time or another. I mean, because we are a vent-oriented society and, you know, griping is OK, but where we need to pay attention to who we're doing it too. So as long as it's to like your significant other, relative, a non-work friend or a dog, that's OK. But keep it outside the company or outside your dorm or wherever it is.

But it can become a negative thing for others bringing others down or you really you may really trust that person that maybe they're not as trustworthy as you think. You could tell them something that shared with someone else, share with the boss. And here you were just trying to vent to let out things. It wasn't anything that you really meant. You're just upset at the time. So just pay close attention to that. Then, along with that, we need to set some personal boundaries. So, Rachel, do you want to tell us about how you set some physical boundaries?

Rachel Chaney: Yeah, and I will say the back to the griping thing there is morale is

important and it's hard to keep morale up if all you're doing is griping and it makes you were you don't like your job. So try to find the right things in your job and try to help others focus on that, too, because if you're known as the one who gripes, it's not going to look good for you in the long run. And I will say everyone vents, I know I do. There are things that happen in personal life or work life that you just want to talk to someone about. I understand that. But that kind of goes into the next set boundaries of what you talk about, of physical boundaries or roommate or work area.

Everyone deserves their own space, but also in your personal boundaries in general. You were at work to do a job and you're getting paid to do that job. I know I have coworkers who we're not friends on social media because they want that separate and that's OK. Set that boundary. Or maybe it's you know, you don't share everything that's going on in your personal life because that is your personal life. It doesn't need shared at work necessarily or with your roommate. And this kind of goes into with roommates. I've always had the saying, don't room with your best friend. And I think that's totally true also because you don't have to be with your with your roommate all the time. So, you know, sometimes with your best friend, you're seeing them all the time and you have no personal space because you're living together in a small apartment or dorm and then you're out socializing together all the time and it can get to be too much. So sometimes it's good, it's OK that you're roommates, not your best friend, because they have their separate circle of friends and you kind of have your separation from each other. So I think that's important. Just try to figure out what your boundaries are.

Another thing is to think about your schedule. Scheduling is a big thing with jobs. It's also a big thing with having a roommate. And Pam, what are some things that we maybe have tips for scheduling with roommates and coworkers, how to make that easier on each other?

Pamela Luker: Well, first, we want to arrive to work on time. You want to remember the other people are expecting you. They're counting on you to be there, maybe to unlock the office. If you let's say maybe you overslept or you get held up in traffic or you have car problems, you want to make sure that you call in, let your coworkers know that you'll be there as soon as possible. So that's important. That's part of being respectful because maybe they don't know where you are or maybe they have something come up. Maybe they have to stay home with a sick kid that day. Someone needs to know that you're not there you're not going to be there on time. So make sure you're doing that.

Let your coworkers, your roommates know when you have meetings or let's say you're going to the library or you're working on a big project and you need some quiet time. It

goes along with what Rachel was saying earlier about how her and her coworkers, when she shared an office with someone. You know, she would let them know that she was having a meeting or she needed to work on some. So she had that quiet time she needed. So make sure they knew you or your coworker were might need that time that you're giving it to them and your schedule and that in.

Make your work, getting it done a priority. So if you spend too much time socializing, you might find it challenging to complete your daily tasks. I know. In case you can't tell, I love to talk. So if I don't pay attention and make my work a priority, I could be distracting my coworkers from getting their work done and keeping myself from getting my work done and just sit and socialize with them because I work with some great people. I love to talk to them, but if I don't watch myself, I could be a distraction to myself and others. Also as a result, remember, your coworkers may have to take on more work to account for what you're not able to complete. So, for example, if I'm out socializing, someone else might have to pick up that slack because I'm not doing my job. So remember that that will not make for warm, fuzzy feelings from your coworkers towards you. So they're going to get a little angry with you. Even if they don't show it right, then something may or may happen and it could become a huge thing like we talked about before. It could become a bigger deal. So if some of these things do happen, we do want to give. So you want to talk about how you give girls, Rachel?

Rachel Chaney: Yes, and I will say, too, on the scheduling thing with roommates and we've talked about in the first episode. Being a night owl or a rooster, you may have that situation with your roommate where they're more of a person who gets up in the morning and more of a morning person. And you're staying up late at night and when you're sharing a dorm room, that can be pretty hard to deal with. So be respectful of that schedule as well. Maybe talk about your schedule each week of what you've got going on. Maybe they have finals week or a midterm week, which I know I don't know about Pam, but when I was taking classes, it always seemed like the first couple of weeks of school, there was one week where all the classes decided to schedule a test during that week and so it was a little stressful. And I'd be going to the library and saying at the library, studying late at night and coming in and my roommate was a light sleeper. And so I was trying to be as careful as I could. Talk about your schedule, try to find a way to make that work for both of you. Maybe it's also like cooking or something and trading off cooking because you've got stuff going on or whatever.

So and then give grace and that kind of ties in with that is do your best to remember that you don't know what others are experiencing. So forgive a little. Focus on fostering positive open relationships. So we've talked about you see that they've have a busy schedule and maybe they or your coworker has something that's come up and they had

to leave work, maybe cover for them for that schedule, if you can. And also that kind of giving grace will also give you brownie points with your boss, too. If they see that you're willing to step in and help. With your roommates, try to understand what they're going through, help them out. If it is to where you can just try to be understanding of each other's feelings. I know me and Pam have talked about when there are different things going on, and maybe we aren't acting like ourselves. We tell each other, hey, I'm sorry, stuff's going on and try to I understand that. I think that's important to work those relationships.

Living and working with others always requires compromise and conversation. We just see to that's the conversation to each new situation. I will say a lot of times with jobs, I just had some really great coworkers and they made the job great. And so if you have great coworkers, you can make that job really good. And the same with roommates. You think of the fun times we have. You don't always think of those negative, but those negative things do happen. But try not to focus on them and try to find ways to enjoy your job and enjoy the time of rooming with someone.

So hopefully these tips that we have shared today will help you create a great working and living relationship. You may not hit on a perfect system from the first day, but if you keep revisiting these tips and keep the conversation going, things will move, move more smoothly day by day.

Pamela Luker: But you think that giving grace like you are saying, I think it's a very important part of the job or being a good roommate, because we're all going to have bad days and learning to give grace to others, they will give grace to you in return when you have those bad days and it will help. Like Rachel is saying, reap those benefits of getting along with coworkers and roommates, you know, there's so, so much less stress and increased health and well-being, things like that that you can benefit from. So definitely give grace the respect for your boundaries and really from day one. And that'll help you grow as a as a person as well as a coworker. And that's all I have.

Rachel Chaney: Yeah, I think that's very true. You know, we talked about the first one must be open from day one. I think that's very important. Tell them how you work, how you room, talk about those things at day one so there's no surprises. So those are our tips for getting along with your roommates and coworkers. We hope you've enjoyed this segment of Grown Up U and be sure to follow us on UADA Grown Up U. Facebook and Instagram, I believe we're on different social media, so definitely follow us on there for updates on upcoming episodes. And you can go to our uaex.uada.edu website and search Grown Up U. And that's where you'll find kind of the hub of our podcast, and has our past episodes, as well as that we'll put future episodes.

If you have any tips for how to get along with roommates or coworkers, definitely share it on social media, on our Grown Up U social media page or just tag us in your post.

We hope you've enjoyed this session. And we'll be back again soon, I'm sure. But we have a bunch of other agents that are helping us with this from across the state as well. So thank you again.

Alison Crane: For more information about this or any grown up podcast or to learn more about educational opportunities, visit our website uaex.uada.edu/lifeskillsand_wellness/grownupu. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram at you a grown up u podcast.

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