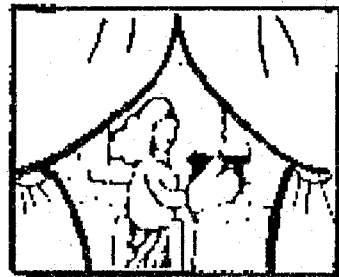
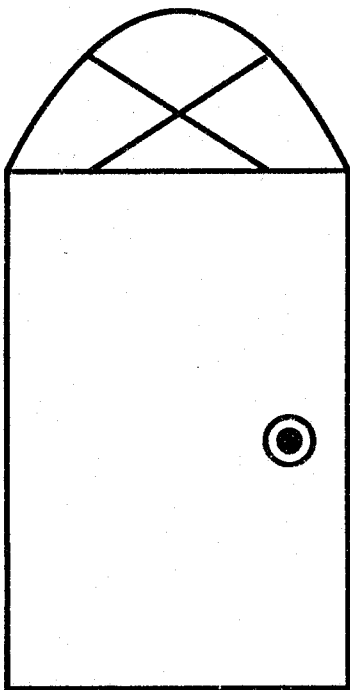
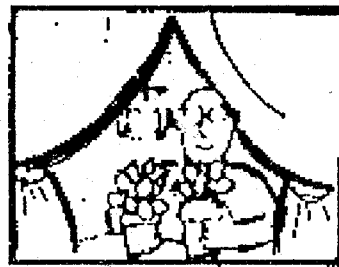
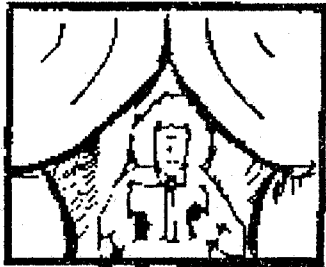


Homesharing for Families



**A Self-Help Guide for Parents,
Adult Children, and Other Relatives**

Shared Housing Resource Center, 6344 Greene St., Philadelphia, PA 19144



Homesharing For Families

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A Self-help Guide For Parents And Adult Children

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* or any other relatives

I. What is Homesharing?

Homesharing is an alternative way of meeting your housing needs with numerous benefits to parents and their adult children, or other relatives. People share living space for different reasons, some of which include skyrocketing rents, taxes, utility and maintenance costs; difficulty in accomplishing all household tasks; personal safety; desire to fill the "empty nest". You may be living in a house too large for your current needs or you may be finding difficulty in coping with all the responsibilities and costs of maintaining a household alone. Homesharing can be a very positive step by allowing people to shape their own solutions to problems which have arisen in their lives. Homesharing can be long term or short term; depending on the needs and desires of the people involved. For these and other reasons, homesharing may make sense for you.

Homesharing is an arrangement where 2 or more people share a dwelling, each having his/her own private space and sharing common living areas. Homesharers may arrange an agreement where rent is paid or exchange services for part or all of the rent. One person may move in with another or the homesharers may both move into a new residence. No two homesharing situations are exactly alike; each is tailored to the needs and desires of the people involved.

Homesharing with Adult Children - Liz Blickos had lived in apartments all of her adult life, because on the budget of a single parent, she could not afford the expenses of a house. Each of her 2 adult children maintained apartments of their own. All three wanted to live in a house for various reasons, especially space. By sharing a house, incidentally including a private swimming pool in the back yard, everyone was able to enjoy the benefits of living in a house. The cost of all the extra space and amenities is less than each paid separately. As retirement approaches for Liz, she feels secure in knowing she will still be able to afford the home she loves.

Homesharing with an Adult Child - Henry and Bonnie Hansen both work outside the home. They have two school age children that need some supervision. Mr Hansen's mother, Ethel, has just become a widow and feels she is rattling around in an empty house. Ethel now homeshares with her son and daughter-in-law in exchange for household chores and supervision of the children. So now Ethel feels and is needed, and Henry and Bonnie have much needed help with household tasks and childcare.

II. Is Homesharing for You?

You may think homesharing sounds interesting, but is it for you? Can you successfully share a residence with a relative or

live in a relative's home? Certainly shared housing is not for everyone. To answer the above questions, it is helpful to examine your past living arrangements. Everyone has a homesharing history. We have all lived with family or friends at some time in our lives. You may want to list on paper all of your past homesharing experiences and review them in your mind. Evaluate what was good and bad. What do you want in the future? What do you want to avoid in the future? Ask yourself the following questions:

- * Can I relate to my homesharer as another adult rather than as a son, daughter, mother, father, etc.?
- * Can I accept being treated like any other adult rather than as I was treated in my role as parent, child, etc.?
- * Am I assertive enough?
- * Can I communicate my needs to other people?
- * Am I able to confront problems and negotiate solutions?
- * Do I listen to and understand other people, especially when there is a difference of opinion?
- * Am I sensitive to other people?
- * Am I "reasonably accepting" of other people's personalities, moods, and preferences?
- * Am I willing to be flexible and compromise?

When relatives pursue homesharing, they often feel ambivalent. These conflicting feelings may seem burdensome, but are actually very helpful in determining what is important to you in a shared living situation. Sharing some of your private living space is a major step and requires serious consideration. What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages?

III. What does it takes to make Homesharing work?

For a shared housing arrangement to be successful, it is imperative that potential homesharers clarify their expectations. You want to make sure there is enough common ground on which to begin a homesharing arrangement. This means exploring differences as well as issues you have in common. The goal is to make certain that there are no extreme dissimilarities which would make living together unwise. Most conflicting views can be negotiated to acceptable situations. Just because you are related, does not mean

you must or will find homesharing desirable at this point in your life. However, if disagreements are discussed and compromises made, you may find homesharing is just the right solution for all parties involved.

A mutually agreed upon trial period is one of the best ways of exploring and understanding each other's expectations. Trial periods can last any length of time that is acceptable to each party.

After you make the decision to homeshare, it is essential to have open, ongoing communication about each person's needs. Many people have difficulty asserting themselves, but the more each person can tell the other what they need and want, the greater likelihood that everyone's needs can be met.

No matter how well you get along, there will be times you disagree. We recommend that you set aside certain times of the day or week, on a regular basis, to meet and talk with each other. In this way, when conflicts occur, there is a natural forum already established for you in which to resolve your differences.

One key to making a homesharing situation work is to arrange and recognize that complementary needs are being met. In other words, each party is benefitting from the homesharing arrangement. The following examples illustrate this principle:

1. A daughter wants to move back home in order to save money to start her own business. Her mother and father want more time for recreation. The daughter becomes a homesharer in exchange for household chores.
2. A mother lives in a large home in an urban area. She is having difficulty with the costs of maintaining the house and feels unsafe living alone. Her son is recently divorced and needs to cut expenses. By moving in together, the mother and son save on expenses. She feels safer and has the opportunity to meet a whole new set of friends in her new neighborhood.

People living together need to feel that both their lives are equally enhanced. When you consider homesharing, look for that balance and sense of mutuality.

IV. A self-questionnaire for those considering sharing their home or apartment with a relative

- * Why do you want to homeshare?
- * Is my house or apartment suitable for sharing? For example, is there a private room for each homesharer? Is

there an easily accessible bathroom? Is there adequate closet or storage space? Are there structural barriers, such as stairs, that might limit who can live in my home? Is there adequate space for more than one homesharer?

- * Is the space I'm making available really ready for another person(s) and their possessions? If not, what must I do to make it ready? Will the space be furnished or unfurnished?
- * If my homesharer wants his/her own furniture for the bedroom, am I willing to store my furniture?
- * How much rent do I want?
- * Would I like some help around the house? If yes, how much assistance do I need?
- * If I want some services, should I reduce the rent, offer free rent, free room and board, or free room and board plus compensation for the services a homesharer would provide?
- * What household chores do I want to be shared? For example: housework, cooking, shopping, gardening, trash removal, laundry, etc.
- * What are my household standards? For example, how clean should common areas be kept?
- * Am I willing to provide any services to my homesharer? For example, cooking, laundry, shopping, etc.
- * What is essential to me in a housemate? For example, do I object to smoking? Would I consider living with a pet?
- * Am I able to view my housemate as another adult and not as a relative?
- * What are my shortcomings that might present difficulties to anyone living with me?
- * What can I do to ensure that my home can become our home when we begin to share?

V. A self-questionnaire for those interested in sharing a family member's home or apartment

- * Why do I want to homeshare?

- * Do I want to take my own bedroom furniture or store it?
- * How much private and common space do I need?
- * What household chores am I willing to share? For example, housework, cooking, shopping, trash removal, laundry, driving (errands), gardening, etc.?
- * Am I interested in providing services (housework, cooking, driving, gardening, etc.) in exchange for an equitable financial arrangement?
- * What do I consider an equitable exchange? Do I want a reduction in rent, free rent, free room and board, or free room and board plus compensation?
- * What are my housekeeping standards? For example, how clean should common areas be kept?
- * Are there stairs and are they a problem for me?
- * Am I prepared to adjust to a household change in return for rent savings, services, or security?
- * Do I expect to share all, some, or no social activities with my housemate?
- * What are my shortcomings that might present difficulties to anyone with whom I live?
- * What can I do to make my new homesharing arrangements feel like home?

VI. Discussion of Homesharing with all parties involved

Before everyone sits down to discuss whether you will homeshare, each person should make a list of questions and preferences. Use these as a guide for your first conversation. In drawing up your list, refer to the questions in sections IV and V. Hold the meeting in the residence that you will be sharing. In this way, if there are any questions relating to space or access, you can determine the answer immediately. For the relative moving into the residence, the meeting will also aid in assessing similarities and differences in lifestyles. This process may seem involved, especially for relatives, but the time and care you take at the beginning can avoid grief and aggravation later. Most issues can be negotiated, if you know they are issues.

Just because you are related does not mean that you will

automatically have the same preferences or lifestyle. Things may have changed since you lived together before. One thing has changed, you are both adults. You both or all need to treat one another as adults, which means recognizing differences. While this may sound easy, many people find some difficulty in seeing beyond old relationships as parent and child or whatever the familial relationship was previously. Especially for this reason, discussion and negotiation are very important.

VII. After the discussion, what next?

After your initial discussion of homesharing, refer to the following questions to help sort out your impressions and insure that all your questions were asked and answered. The reflection questions we have provided may seem too extensive and cumbersome to you. We have intentionally been thorough in compiling these lists so that you can choose what is important for you. You may wish to use all or none of them. Feel free to exercise your own intuition and adapt the questions accordingly.

Post-meeting questions for those sharing their home

- * Did I discuss what is important to me in a homesharing situation?
- * Have I asked all essential questions such as: home entertaining; overnight guests; work, sleep and wake-up schedules; temperature preferences for summer and winter months; privacy needs; television habits; etc.
- * Have we agreed on meal preparation and schedules?
- * Have we agreed about who is responsible for what household chores?
- * Have we discussed service exchange?
- * Have we agreed on financial arrangements?
- * Do we have similar values regarding childrearing? (If children are involved in the homesharing)
- * Have we discussed who may and may not discipline the child or children?
- * Can we overcome any differences?
- * Have we discussed what space will be private and what space will be shared?

- * Have we discussed pets?
- * Do I feel satisfied that there are not important unspoken needs that may emerge in the future?
- * How long do I want this arrangement to last?
- * Have we considered using a written agreement to specify rights and obligations?

Post-meeting questions for those moving into a relative's home

- * Do my preferences fit in with the homeowner's?
- * What needs are met by this situation? Which needs would not be met?
- * Can any of these things be changed or overcome to suit me?
- * Can we relate to one another as adults rather than as relatives?
- * Did I discuss what is essential to me, such as: home entertaining; overnight guests; work, sleep and wake-up schedules; temperature preferences for summer and winter; privacy needs; television habits; etc.?
- * Have we agreed upon meal preparation and schedules?
- * Have we agreed upon who is responsible for what household chores?
- * Do I want to live in the house as a family member or as a boarder, who just uses the premises?
- * Do I feel satisfied that there are not important unspoken needs that may emerge in the future?
- * Have we discussed childrearing?
- * Have we discussed who may and may not discipline the child or children?
- * Have we discussed pets?
- * Have we agreed upon financial arrangements?
- * Have we agreed upon what space will be shared and what space will be private?

- * Do I expect to share all, some or no social activities with my housemate?
- * Can we overcome any differences?
- * Will I be happy living in this neighborhood?
- * Am I close enough to friends, public transportation, religious institution, and other services?
- * How long do I want this arrangement to last?
- * Have we considered using a written agreement to specify rights and obligations?

VIII. Checklist of Discussion Points for Homesharers

Sharing tasks, space and things

- _____ What areas of the home will be shared and what areas will be private?
- _____ Who is responsible for household tasks?
- _____ Cleanliness standards for ALL rooms in the house
- _____ Furnishings
- _____ Personal possessions (tv, stereo, dishes, linens, tools, etc.)
- _____ Laundry
- _____ Storage space

Money

- _____ What is the rent? When is it due?
- _____ If there is a service exchange, what is the financial arrangement, and what are the services?
- _____ Who pays the utility bills?
- _____ Separate telephone lines or share telephones and bills?
- _____ Telephone answering machine?
- _____ Buy food together?

Habits and preferences

- _____ Daily life (work, sleep, wake-up and bathroom schedules)
- _____ Temperature preferences for summer and winter months
- _____ Smoking
- _____ Pets
- _____ Noise level
- _____ Television habits
- _____ Home entertaining (overnight guests, visitors)
- _____ Music preferences and volume
- _____ Alcohol and drug use

Meals

- _____ Eat together? Schedule?
- _____ Who shops for food?
- _____ Who cooks?
- _____ Who cleans up and when?

Getting along

- _____ What are our needs for privacy?
- _____ Who disciplines the children?
- _____ Do we want to share _____ all, _____ some, or _____ no social activities?
- _____ How will we handle changing needs? problems? disagreements?

Medical Considerations

- _____ Exchange doctor's telephone numbers
- _____ What arrangements will be made in the event of injury or illness?

Beginning and Ending

_____ How long is the agreement to last?

_____ How much notice is needed to terminate the agreement?

_____ Do we want a written agreement?

_____ How often do we want to review our agreement?

IX. Getting along

While there are many benefits to homesharing, problems or disagreements can certainly arise. Dealing with problems does not have to be a negative experience; in fact, it can be a growing and uplifting experience. Here are a few suggestions to successfully deal with small problems before they grow into BIG problems:

- * Remember you are not dealing with this situation as the "parent" or "child".
- * Express clearly the problem as you see it, how you feel, and what you would like to have done to change the situation.
- * Discuss one issue at a time without being defensive.
- * Listen carefully to what the other person is saying, thinking, and feeling about the problem.
- * List different solutions and steps for resolving the problem. Don't disregard or reject any ideas.
- * Discuss possible solutions.
- * Choose a plan that feels comfortable for all involved.
- * Decide how you will implement the plan.
What are the steps?
Who will do what, and when?
- * Decide on a time to discuss progress and/or other problems.
- * Recognize what you have both accomplished in working out the problem.

X. A Model Homesharing Lease

(Laws vary from state to state. This lease may not be a valid legal document in your state. You may wish to consult an attorney, if you want a legal document.)

PARTIES: This agreement made the _____ day of _____, 19___. Between _____ called "Homeowner" and _____ called "Homesharer."

PROPERTY: Homeowner is the homeowner or lessee. The following premises located at _____ in the city of _____ in the county of _____ in the state of _____. Homeowner agrees to share such premises with Homesharer, with homesharing consisting of entire premises, with the exception of:

and with the limitations of:

- a. smoking _____
- b. pets _____
- c. guest (overnight) _____
- d. other _____

TERMS: A. Rent \$_____ per month
B. Due date for the rent payment _____
C. Commencement date of agreement _____
D. Services provided in addition to or in lieu of rent by the Homesharer shall be: see Rental Agreement

RENTAL AGREEMENT:

Services performed by:	Homeowner	Homesharer	Shared
Housekeeping/Cleaning	()	()	()
Cooking	()	()	()
Shopping	()	()	()
Laundry	()	()	()
Yardwork	()	()	()
Childcare	()	()	()

We agree to the special conditions set forth below:

1. Cleaning: who, when, and what _____

2. Meals: who, what, and when _____

3. Laundry: _____
4. Shopping: _____
5. Childcare: _____

6. Other: _____

Utilities:	Homeowner	Homesharer	Shared
Electricity	()	()	()
Gas	()	()	()
Water & Sewer	()	()	()
Telephone	()	()	()
Other: _____	()	()	()

Food costs: The Homeowner and Homesharer agree to the following:

- _____ divide cost equally
- _____ each purchase separately
- _____ other

TERMINATION:

Either party may terminate this agreement by giving a _____ days written notice to the other party.

We agree to be legally bound by this agreement.

Homesharer:

Homeowner:

signature

signature

Date _____

Date _____

Witness:

Witness:
