

Multigenerational Living: Tips for Keeping the Peace and Preserving Privacy



Ground Rules

Set ground rules for financial, cleaning and maintenance responsibilities. Determine who pays for what, who is responsible for maintenance, routine household shopping, and who does which cleaning chores on a regular schedule. (Or, if preferred, hire outside help and split the cost equitably.)

Respectful communication: Let others know when you are coming and going—not because you need to “report in” but because you don’t have the right to make other members of the household worry. It’s just the mature thing to do.

Employ the “Golden Rule” and treat others accordingly: Don’t ask someone else to do something you aren’t willing to do. Don’t judge the way another person lives. Don’t try to micromanage or tell someone else how to do their job (of parenting, working, or living).

Set limits: No one should be a “built-in” babysitter for children or pets that belong to other housemates. No one should be expected to perform maid duties for everyone else or to cover all the financial expenses. Any “in kind” services offered should be outlined in advance and not taken for granted.

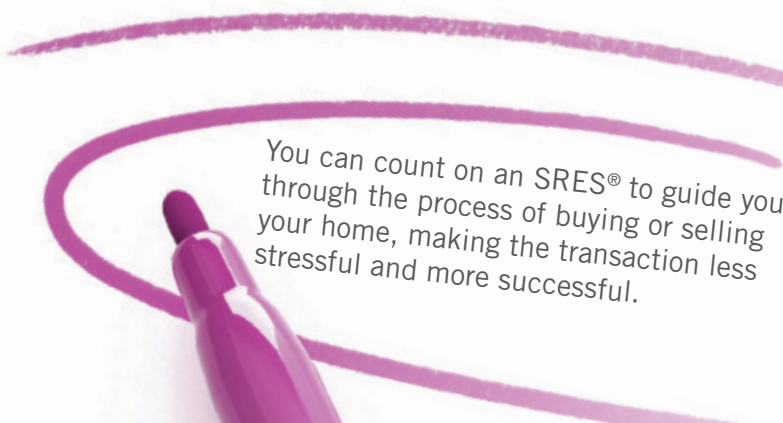
Privacy and Respect

Determine which areas are shared and which are private. Treat private living space similar to another tenant’s apartment. Knock before entering. Keep an “off limits” policy when the private areas are not occupied. Always ask before borrowing anything. Realize that different people have different

schedules. Just because you are up at the crack of dawn doesn’t mean everyone should be.

Beyond physical space: Don’t subject your housemates to your tastes in music, scents, and friends. If you like to listen to loud music, invest in a good set of headphones. If you like to entertain, be sure your guest respects others’ personal space. If someone likes to burn uber-floral scented candles that others find distasteful, work together to find a scent that won’t permeate other living spaces.

Communication: Keep the lines of communication open. Be honest and respectful of each other’s feelings while finding the best solution for any points of contention. Monthly “family council” meetings may be used to discuss how things are going, what is working, and what’s not. Express your concerns with love and respect in a timely manner; keeping quiet until you are upset only complicates issues and builds resentment. Seek to solve problems, rather than assigning blame. Remember multi-family housing options work best when every aspect is approached with love, respect, and understanding.



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