

# **A Place of My Own: A Workbook**



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## 1 – Introduction

If you're reading this, you're probably living with your family. You live in the city, or the suburbs, or maybe out in the country. You probably live in an apartment or a house. Or maybe you're living in a dormitory at a school.

Have you ever thought about what it might be like to live away from your family, either on your own or with housemates? Most people do at some time in their lives. Here are some questions you might want to think about:

- What's my lifestyle?
- What (or who) would I want to be near?
- Where would I want to live?
- What kind of building would I want to live in?
- What kind of unit would I want to live in?
- Do I want to live with someone? Who?
- What do I need to know to take care of a house or apartment?
- How can I be a good neighbor?
- What can I afford?

This workbook can help you answer these questions. Even if you are happy living with your family now, it is good to think about your options, in case things change.

You can do this workbook by yourself, or you can ask someone you like and trust to help you. **There are no right or wrong answers.** The whole idea is to help you think about the questions. When you are asked what you like or dislike, make sure the answer you put is what **you** feel, not what you think is the answer the writer of the workbook is looking for.

You may find out that you can't have everything you want – maybe you want to live in a city and raise chickens, and the city won't allow it. Maybe you want to live by yourself, but you need a housemate to help pay rent. But hopefully you can figure out the things that are **most** important to you.

## 2 – What's my "lifestyle?"

"Lifestyle" is a word that describes the way you like to live. It's important to live in a place that fits your lifestyle. If you have housemates, it's important that their lifestyle is a good fit with yours. Here are some questions about your lifestyle:

**I like to (circle one):**

Get up early                  Sleep late

**I like to (circle one):**

Go to bed early              Stay up late

**I often get up for a while in the middle of the night (circle one):**

Yes                              No

**I like my living spaces to be (circle one):**

Neat and clean    Kind of sloppy

**I like (circle all that apply):**

Talking about lots of different things

Talking about my special interests, which are:

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Hanging out in my room by myself

Hanging out with other people, doing something together

Hanging out with other people, doing something by myself

Watching other people do things

**Now let's list some things you like, and things you don't like:**

Foods I like:

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Foods I can't stand:

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TV and movies I like watching:

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TV, videos and movies I can't stand watching:

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I don't like watching TV, videos or movies (circle if true)

Music I like listening to:

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Music I can't stand listening to:

<hr/>	<hr/>

I don't like listening to music (circle if true)

Video and computer games I like are:

<hr/>	<hr/>

Video and computer games I can't stand are:

<hr/>	<hr/>

I don't like video or computer games (circle if true)

Places I like to go:

<hr/>	<hr/>

Places I can't stand going:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**I like to (circle one):**

Go places every day

Go places a few times a week

Stay home a lot

**I get around by (circle all that apply):**

Walking

Bus

Subway

Bike

I drive myself

Other people drive me

**Having a pet is really important to me (circle one):**

Yes

No

**Having a yard is really important to me (circle one):**

Yes

No

**Some things I do often that might bother neighbors or housemates (circle all that apply):**

Make loud noises

Jump up and down a lot

Hit or kick walls

Keep lights off all the time

Keep lights on all the time

Play with water

Play music/videos/TV/  
computer/games loudly

Run back and forth

Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**I don't like crowds (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I don't like it when other people or things make loud noises (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I don't like it when other people play music/videos/TV/computer/games loudly (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I worry about crime a lot (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I am lonely or scared when I am home alone (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I like being home alone (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I will need a housemate to help pay for a place to live (you may need to ask your family about this) (circle one):**

Yes            No

**It's really important to me to have my own bathroom (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I smoke/drink alcohol (circle one):**

Yes            No

**I don't like it when other people smoke/drink alcohol (circle one):**

Yes            No

### 3 – What would I want to be near?

Maybe there are things you like to do, or places you like to go, that are really important to you. You probably want to live near places where you can do those things, and you probably want to live near the places you like to go. Just remember, if you like to go bowling for example, you don't necessarily have to go to the same bowling alley you go to now. It may be enough to live near a bowling alley.

#### Things I like to do are (circle all that apply):

- |                             |                      |                  |                          |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Arcade games                | Bingo                | Bowling          | Canoe, kayak or row boat |
| Dancing                     | Ice skating          | Go for walks     | Go out to eat            |
| Listen to music             | Go to the playground | Go to the park   | Go to the store          |
| Innertubing                 | Lift weights         | Motor boat       | Play baseball            |
| Play basketball             | Play football        | Play soccer      | Rock climbing            |
| Ride the T or Commuter Rail | Sailing              | Scooter riding   | Skateboarding            |
| Skiing                      | Snowmobile           | Special Olympics | Swimming                 |
| Take classes                | Trampoline           | Walk a dog       |                          |

#### Other things I like to do:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

#### Places I like to go are (circle all that apply):

Amusement park  
(Like Canobie Lake,  
Six Flags, Fun World,  
etc.)

Baseball games

Basketball games

Beach

Book store

Build-a-bear

Church or  
synagogue

Comic store

Fast food  
restaurants  
(like Burger King,  
McDonald's)

Football games

Hockey games

Jordan's  
Furniture

Mall

Movies

Sit-down  
restaurants  
(Like the 99,  
Bickford's,  
Outback, etc.)

YMCA

Zoo

**Other places I like to go:**

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#### 4 – Who would I want to be near?

There may be people you see regularly, people you want to remain a part of your life. These might be family or friends, or they may just be people you see regularly. Maybe there is someone you see at church, or a person you go bowling with.

You may not need to live close to them to see them regularly. It's possible they could drive to see you, or you could take a bus to meet them. But it is important to write down who they are. That way, you can plan ways to keep them in your life.

When you write down the people you want in your life, make four different lists.

**First, write down the people you feel closest to:**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Now, write down the people you like to do things with, like going to dinner or to play basketball with. Don't include people you already wrote down in the first list.**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Now, write down people you like who you see at places you go, like school or a club or sports. Don't include people you wrote down in the first two lists.**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Now, write down the people you like who are paid to see you. These are people like doctors, teachers, people who work at stores you go to. Don't include people you wrote down in the first three lists:**

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## 5 – Where would I like to live?

There are different kinds of places to live:

- Big cities
- Small cities
- Town centers
- Suburbs
- The country

### Cities

**Big cities** have a lot of things to do: plenty of places to work, music, movie theaters, parks, and classes are just some examples. It is usually easy to get around a big city if you don't have a car, either by bus or subway (the "T"), or by walking. Even if you have a car and can drive, the traffic may make it a hard place to drive.

But big cities can be very loud and very crowded. You live right next to your neighbors, and you will need to be quiet at night so you don't disturb them. You probably won't have a yard. You may need to go to a park if you want to throw a football or ride a bike.

**Small cities** are a lot like big cities. They may be a little quieter. They may be a little safer. But they may be a little harder to get around in without a car. There are usually buses, but they may not go as many places, and they may not run as often.

**What do I like about cities?**

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**What do I dislike about cities?**

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## **Town centers**

In the center of a town, and for about a mile around it, it is often easy to walk to stores and other activities. It may be possible to have your own yard, or you may share a yard with neighbors. If you live in a house, you may be further away from your neighbors.

The down side of life in a town center is that there is not quite as much to do as in a city. There may not be bus service, and it may be harder to get around in the winter without a car. There also may not be as many jobs.

**What do *I like* about towns?**

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**What do *I dislike* about towns?**

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## **Suburbs**

Suburbs are very nice if you don't like crowds. Most houses have a yard, and you don't have to worry as much about bothering the neighbors. Suburbs are often safer than cities. There is less crime and less traffic. You can garden or have pets, but you may not be able to have some kinds of animals, like chickens.

But in the suburbs, you almost always need a car to get around. If you don't drive or own a car, it can be very hard to get to work, to stores, or to activities like restaurants or movies. It also can cost more to live in a house in the suburbs than in an apartment in a town or small city.

**What do I like about suburbs?**

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**What do I dislike about suburbs?**

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**The country**

The country is a nice place to live if you like to have a lot of land, to walk, to garden, or to have animals like chickens or goats.

In the country, it is almost impossible to get places without a car. You are usually far from your neighbors, and it can be a long way to work, to stores, or to other activities.

**What do I like about the country?**

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**What do I dislike about the country?**

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As you can see, picking the right place to live has a lot to do with the things you like to do and the way you get from place to place. Look at the answers you gave to each of the questions above. Now, **in the left hand column**, check all the things that are very important **to you**:

✓		City	Town center	Suburb	Country
	Lots of places to go, like restaurants or classes	✓			
	Lots of choices about where to work	✓			
	Being able to get to places on the bus or subway	✓			
	Being able to get to places by walking	✓	✓		
	Safer		✓	✓	✓
	Having a yard		✓	✓	✓
	Being close to neighbors	✓	✓		
	Having some space between me and the neighbors		✓	✓	✓
	Having space to garden or have pets			✓	✓
	Being able to have farm animals, like goats or chickens				✓
	<b>Total</b>				

Count how many answers you checked that are found in cities: \_\_\_\_\_

Count how many answers you checked that are found in town centers: \_\_\_\_\_

Count how many answers you checked that are found in suburbs: \_\_\_\_\_

Count how many answers you checked that are found in the country: \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you think you would like to live? (You can give more than one answer. For example, you might say "in a town center or a suburb".)

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## 6 – What kind of building would I like to live in?

Just as there are different places to live, there are different kinds of buildings to live in. There are:

- Houses
- Houses that are attached to other houses
- Small apartment buildings
- Large apartment buildings

### Houses

Houses are bigger than apartments. Often they have a yard. They are not as close to the neighbors, so you don't have to be as quiet. You can usually have a pet.

Houses usually cost more than apartments. Living in a house is usually more work than living in an apartment, because it is bigger. There is more to clean and take care of, and you also have to take care of the yard.

**What do I like about a house?**

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**What do I dislike about a house?**

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## Houses attached to other houses

A house attached to another house is sometimes called a duplex or a townhouse. Some attached houses are “**condos**”. This means each attached house is owned by a different person. Often an attached house is cheaper than a house that is by itself. You may have a yard, but you may have to share it with another house. You can usually have a pet.

Because an attached house shares a wall (sometimes more than one wall) with another house, you need to get along well with the people in the other house or houses. You need to be quieter than you would in a house that is by itself.

**What do I like about an attached house?**

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**What do I dislike about an attached house?**

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## Apartment buildings

Apartment buildings allow a lot of people to live in one building. But each person or group of roommates has their own private space that is **apart** from other people; that is why each private space is called an **apartment**. If each apartment is owned by a different person, the apartments are called “**condos**”.

Apartments are usually less expensive than houses. Often they are close to a bus stop, and to stores and restaurants.

You need to be quieter in an apartment than in a house, so you don't disturb your

neighbors. You will probably need to do your laundry in a laundry room you share with your neighbors, and you may need to pay to do your laundry. You may or may not be able to have a pet in an apartment: it depends on the rules in that building.

**Small apartment buildings** don't have as many neighbors, so people may know each other better than they would in a large apartment building. Some small apartment buildings are really **multi-family houses**: that is, they are houses that have been divided into apartments.

Sometimes **large apartment buildings** have extra features, like an exercise room.

**What do I like about an apartment building?**

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**What do I dislike about an apartment building?**

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Look at the answers you gave to each of the questions above. Now, **in the left hand column**, check all the things that are very important **to you**:

✓		house	attached house	small apartment building	large apartment building
	Doesn't cost as much		✓	✓	✓
	Probably has a yard	✓	✓		
	I don't need to worry about making noise	✓			
	I can probably have a pet	✓	✓		
	I can be close to the neighbors		✓	✓	✓
	I can be close to a bus			✓	✓
	I can be close to restaurants and stores			✓	✓
	<b>Total</b>				

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in a house: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in an attached house:  
\_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in a small apartment  
building: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in a large apartment  
building: \_\_\_\_\_**

**What kind of building do you think you would like to live in? (You can give  
more than one answer. For example, you might say "an attached house or  
small apartment".)**

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## 7 – What kind of unit would I want to live in?

A unit is the space where a person or a group of roommates live. There are different kinds of units:

- A house or apartment shared by more than one person. Each person has his or her own bedroom, and shares other rooms.
- A house or apartment shared by more than one person, where each person has his or her own bedroom **and** bathroom, and shares other rooms.
- A one bedroom apartment, where one person lives, and the bedroom has its own door.
- A studio apartment, where one person lives, and everything except the bathroom is one big room.
- Single Room Occupancy (SRO), where each person has his or her own bedroom and a small living area, but shares other rooms, like bathrooms and the kitchen.
- Enhanced Single Room Occupancy (Enhanced SRO), where each person has his or her own bedroom, bathroom, and living area, and has a sink, a counter and a microwave. People also share common space like a kitchen, living room, and dining room.

### Shared house or apartment

Sharing a house or apartment saves money, because people can each put in money to pay for things. When you share a house, there are usually other people around to do things with, so it is not lonely. Also, it's nice to have roommates if you are scared to be alone in a house or apartment.

If you like lots of privacy, it may be difficult to share space with other people. It's important that you and your roommates get along. You don't have to like all the same things, but it can be a problem if you annoy each other.

Sometimes people who live in a shared house or apartment get along better if each person has his or her **own bathroom**.

### What do I like about a shared house or apartment?

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**What do I dislike about a shared house or apartment?**

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**One bedroom apartment**

A one bedroom apartment has lots of privacy. You don't have to share space with other people. When other people come over to visit, you can shut your bedroom door, so they don't go into it or look at the things you keep in your bedroom.

A one bedroom apartment costs more money than sharing space with a roommate. Also, you may be lonely living by yourself. If you are scared to be alone, living alone is probably not a good idea.

**What do I like about a one bedroom apartment?**

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**What do I dislike about a one bedroom apartment?**

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## **Studio apartment**

A studio apartment is less expensive than a one bedroom apartment. You don't have to share space with other people.

When other people come over, other people can see the area where you sleep, and keep your things. A studio apartment may still cost more than sharing space with a roommate. You may be lonely. A studio apartment is probably not a good idea if you are scared to be alone.

### **What do I like about a studio apartment?**

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### **What do I dislike about a studio apartment?**

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## **Single Room Occupancy (SRO)**

Single Room Occupancy can be very cheap, since you are sharing space with many people. You have more privacy than you would in a shared house or apartment. There are people around to do things with, but you don't have to spend time with them if you don't want to.

You still have to share bathrooms and cooking space with other people. Often, the other people you are sharing with are people you don't know very well. You don't get to pick who the people in the other units are. It can also be very hard to find buildings that have Single Room Occupancy.

**What do I like about Single Room Occupancy (SRO)?**

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**What do I dislike about Single Room Occupancy (SRO)?**

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**Enhanced Single Room Occupancy (Enhanced SRO)**

Enhanced Single Room Occupancy is usually cheaper than an apartment. It has more privacy than a shared house or apartment. You do not have to share a bathroom, and you can stay in your unit to cook with your microwave. There are people around to do things with, but you don't have to spend time with them if you don't want to.

Enhanced Single Room Occupancy costs a little bit more than Single Room Occupancy. You still have to share some common areas, like a kitchen or living room, with people you don't know very well. You don't get to pick who the people in the other units are. It can also be very hard to find buildings that have Enhanced Single Room Occupancy.

**What do I like about Enhanced Single Room Occupancy (Enhanced SRO)?**

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**What do I dislike about Enhanced Single Room Occupancy (Enhanced SRO)?**

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Look at the answers you gave to each of the questions above. Now, ***in the left hand column***, check all the things that are very important ***to you***:

✓		shared house or apartment	shared house or apartment with private bath	one bedroom apartment	studio apartment	SRO	enhanced SRO
	It costs less	✓	✓			✓	✓
	I have people to do things with	✓	✓			✓	✓
	I don't have to be alone	✓	✓			✓	✓
	I have my own bathroom		✓	✓	✓		✓
	I have my own space to cook			✓	✓		✓
	I don't have to share space			✓	✓		
	People don't see the place I sleep	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	<b>Total</b>						

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in a shared house or apartment: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in a shared house or apartment with private bath: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in a one bedroom apartment: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in a studio apartment: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in Single Room Occupancy (SRO): \_\_\_\_\_**

**Count how many answers you checked that are found in Enhanced Single Room Occupancy (Enhanced SRO): \_\_\_\_\_**

**What kind of unit do you think you would like to live in? (You can give more than one answer. For example, you might say "a shared house or an SRO".)**

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## 8 – What else is important to me?

There may be other features that are important to you in deciding where to live. You will need to decide which ones are “must haves”. You may want to talk with family or someone you trust in deciding which ones are must haves. Remember, some things might be nice to have, but it may be impossible to have all the things you would like at a price you can afford.

**Here is a list of features you might like to have where you live. Check off whether each feature is 1) unimportant, 2) would be nice, or 3) is a “must have”.**

Accessibility features:

	Not important	Nice	Must have
Clearance for wheelchair under sinks and counters			
Disabled parking space			
Doors and hallways 32 inches wide			
Grip bars in bathroom			
Levered door handles			
Lowered counter-tops			
Ramp			
Roll-in shower			
Thermostats and electrical outlets easily reachable from a wheelchair			
Visual alarms and doorbell alert			

Other:

	Not important	Nice	Must have
Air conditioning			
Balcony, deck, patio or porch			
Basement			
Deck or patio			
Garage			

**Now write down anything you think is a “must have” that isn’t on the list:**

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## 9 – Do I want to live with someone? Who?

If you like having people to do things with all the time, you may want to live with someone. Or if you don't like to be alone, you may want to live with someone. If you need to save money by sharing costs, or if you need people to help you stay safe, you may **need** to live with someone.

If you are going to live with someone, it's important that you get along. You don't have to like to do the same things all the time. But if you find you really annoy each other, you may want to pick someone else to live with.

How will you know if you will really annoy each other? To start with, you should both complete Chapter 2 in this workbook, "What is my 'lifestyle'?" If a lot of the things you really like to do are things that the other person can't stand (or the other way around), that may be a sign you shouldn't live together.

If you have decided you won't annoy each other too much, you should still put it to the test. Spend some time together doing different things. Maybe you could spend a weekend together.

Even if you get along, there will be times you disagree. Sometimes disagreements happen because you thought you were going to do something one way, and the other person thought you were going to do it a different way. For example, maybe you thought the other person was going to do the dishes all the time. Maybe he thought you were going to take turns. In other words, you both **assumed** something.

It is very important when you live with someone that you decide certain things ahead of time. Here are some examples:

- Who cooks, and when?
- Who washes the dishes, and when?
- Who cleans the kitchen (or the bathroom, or vacuums), and when?
- Do you go food shopping together? Who pays, and how much?
- Do you share all the food you buy, only some of it, or none of it?
- Where does the furniture come from?
- What about visitors? Can they stay overnight? How long can they stay?
- Are there things you don't want to share? What are they?
- Are you ever allowed to go into each other's rooms?
- Who decides what to watch on TV, and when?

You may want to ask your family or someone you trust to give you advice when you are deciding things with a possible roommate.

Even when you decide things ahead of time, you will still disagree sometimes. You need to have a way to work things out. Maybe you could plan to have a meeting once a week where you talk about the things that are bothering you, and decide together what to do about them. Remember, you may need to compromise. In other words, you may not always get to do everything the way you want to. But if the other person always gets his or her own way, it may be a sign that you shouldn't live together.

**Please check all that apply:**

- I want to live with someone because I want to have someone to do things with
- I want to live with someone because I am afraid to live alone
- I need to live with someone because I need to share costs
- I need to live with someone because I need someone to help me stay safe
- I don't need to live with someone
- I don't want to live with someone

It is possible you may live with more than one other person. Maybe you need 3 or 4 people to share all the costs. Or maybe you want to live with one or two friends, but you need another person to live with you to help you do things, or to stay safe.

**If you want to live with someone, do you have anyone in mind? If so, who?**

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**If you need to live with someone to help you do things or stay safe, do you have anyone in mind? If so, who?**

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## 10 – How do I take care of the place I live?

Living on your own, or with other people, means you need to help take care of the place you live. This includes taking care of you, as well as taking care of your house or apartment. You may already do a lot of these things. But if you are living with your family, it's pretty common to let your parents or other family members do a lot (even if you know you shouldn't!). You'll need to be prepared to do more if you live on your own or with roommates.

**Let's take a look at what's involved. For each item, check off if it is 1) something you do now, 2) something you think you can learn how to do, or 3) something you think you will need help with.**

### Taking care of myself:

Food:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Feeding myself			
Choosing healthy food			
Use a microwave			
Use a toaster			
Use a stove			
Use an oven			
Use a can opener			
Use measuring cups			
Use measuring spoons			
Use sharp knives and utensils			
Use a dishwasher			
Follow a recipe			
Set the table			
Do the dishes			
Put away leftovers immediately			
Know when to throw food away			
Make a grocery list			
Grocery shop			

Hygiene:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Bathing or showering			
Washing hair			
Shaving			
Combing or brushing hair			
Get a haircut			
Brushing teeth			

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Trimming nails			
Hand washing			
Using the toilet			
Changing a menstrual pad (if you're a woman)			
Maintain privacy in the bathroom			

Clothing:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Dressing			
Buttoning			
Zippering			
Tying shoes			
Choosing the right clothes for the weather			
Choosing the right clothes for the occasion			
Washing clothes			
Drying clothes			
Folding clothes			
Putting away clothes			

Health:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Know any diagnosis you have			
Know names of your doctors			
Contact your doctors			
Make a doctor's appointment			
Keep track of appointments			
Take medication			
Know what medications you take			
Know why you take each medication			
Get a prescription filled or refilled			
Use a first aid kit			
Know when to go to the emergency room			

Safety:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Lock a door			
Use a key			
Use a phone			
Know how to call 911			
Know when to call 911			
Know how to use a fire extinguisher			
Know about smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and when to change their batteries			
Have an escape plan (know when and how to leave the house)			
Practice escape plan			
Know where flashlights are			
Know where extra flashlight batteries are			
Know what to do if locked out (for example, know where spare key is, call landlord, etc.)			

Money:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Count money			
Use an ATM machine			
Use a debit card			
Use a credit card			
Pay a bill with a check			
Address an envelope			
Stamp an envelope			
Mail a bill payment			
Pay a bill online			
Check bank balance online			
Check bank balance by phone			
Know when a payment has not cleared the bank			
Stick to a budget			
Safely borrow and lend money			

**Taking care of the place I live:**

Cleaning:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Make bed			
Change sheets regularly			
Straighten up			
Dust			
Sweep			
Mop			
Vacuum			
Take out trash			
Put trash out weekly (if curbside pickup)			
Recycle			
Wipe counters and table			
Clean sinks			
Scrub bathtub			
Clean toilet			
Wash mirrors and windows			

Maintenance:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Change a light bulb			
Plunge a toilet			
Flip a circuit breaker on and off			
Turn off water to a sink or toilet			
Turn off water main			
Use a thermostat			
Change batteries in smoke, CO detectors			
Turn off smoke detector			
Shovel walk or driveway (if tenant's responsibility)			
Rake leaves (if there's a yard)			
Bag leaves (if there's a yard)			
Mow lawn (if there's a yard)			

Get a professional (know how to call **AND** how to describe what you need:

	I do this now	I can learn to do this	I will need help with this
Landlord, property manager, or maintenance			
Electrician			
Plumber			
Heating or AC contractor			
Phone company			
Cable company			
Handyman			
Locksmith			

Don't get intimidated: nobody expects you to be able to all these things right away. Some of them you may always need help with. It's OK. You can need help with things and still be able to live independently.

If you are interested, a hygiene and cleaning schedule, and a how-to guide for keeping a clean kitchen and bathroom are both available at:

[http://autismhousingpathways.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Cleaning\\_rubric1.pdf](http://autismhousingpathways.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Cleaning_rubric1.pdf).

You might find them helpful.

## 11 – How can I be a good neighbor? How can I be a good tenant?

Hopefully, you get to choose the people you live with. But you don't get to choose your neighbors. Neighbors may not share your interests or lifestyle. Still, it is important to try to get along with neighbors. That doesn't mean you have to be friends or spend lots of time with them. You just need to avoid doing things that will make it harder for them to live in their own homes. Otherwise, you may find the neighbors call the landlord (if you rent the place you live), or even the police, to complain.

What are some strategies for being a good neighbor?

- Clean up after yourself in any spaces you share with neighbors (for example, a common laundry room, kitchen, lounge or bathroom); this leaves a clean space for your neighbors.
- Keeping noise down after 10 p.m. (this includes music, the television, dancing, singing, talking, self-stimulatory behavior); this allows your neighbors to sleep.
- Keeping your own living space clean; this will help keep bugs and rodents away.
- Avoid blocking corridors or entranceways with your belongings; this will allow people to get through with their own belongings.
- Avoid hanging out in the corridors or entranceways, either by yourself or with others; people may find this threatening.
- Try not to leave things like boxes, trash cans, or old appliances (these are just a few examples) out in front of your house for more than a few hours; this can be seen as making the neighborhood look ugly.
- It is polite to say hello to neighbors, and to respond when they say hello. If someone has not been interested in having a conversation in the past, it is generally not a good idea to push them to have one. They may see this as stalking or harassment. Similarly, staring at or watching neighbors may be seen as stalking or harassment.
- Keeping your own living space from getting too cluttered; if the floor is covered with items, it can create a fire hazard for you and your neighbors.
- If you have guests, make sure they are using these strategies, too.

**Write down any of these strategies you think you may need some help practicing:**

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What about being a good tenant? You need to have a good relationship with your landlord, property manager, or maintenance people. Otherwise, you could find yourself threatened with eviction. The main ways to be a good tenant are to:

- Pay rent on time
- Follow all rules for tenants
- Use the strategies for being a good neighbor

If you find you are having trouble with your landlord, ask him or her to write down exactly what the problem is, and exactly what you can do to fix it. Sometimes problems come up because we don't understand what the expectations are in a certain situation. Ask your landlord to spell it out.

## 12 – What can I afford?\*

By now you should have a pretty good idea of what kind of place you would like to live. And you should have a pretty good idea of what kind of person you want to live with (unless you plan to live alone).

Before you can actually find a place to live, though, you have to know how much you can afford. You may find you want to live in a house, but can only afford an apartment. You may want central air conditioning, but may not be able to afford it. Or you might find you can afford some of the things you want if you have a roommate.

**To find out what you can afford, first write down how much income you get each month. You may need to ask your family or someone else you trust to help you figure this out.**

**Money from jobs:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Money from the government:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Money you get regularly from family or friends:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Anything else:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Total monthly income:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, let's figure how much money you spend each month on things that have *nothing to do* with a place to live.**

**Food:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Clothes:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Transportation:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Entertainment and recreation:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Health care (like doctor visits):** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Other (including phone, internet)<sup>+</sup>:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Total non-housing expenses** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\* Adapted from ARC Minnesota and the Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration (UAP) University of Minnesota, "A Guidebook on Consumer Controlled Housing for Minnesotans with Developmental Disabilities", 2000.

<sup>+</sup> Include items like haircuts, toiletries, laundry, etc. There are budget worksheets available online you can get ideas from. Search for "personal budget worksheet".

**Now, let's find out how much you have available for a place to live:**

**Total income:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**minus**

**Total non-housing expenses:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Total available for housing:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

What does “total available for housing” mean? If you **own** the place you live, it means the money you have each month to pay for:

- Mortgage (principal and interest)
- Condo fee (if you live in a condo; these help pay for maintenance and repairs of the building's common areas)
- Property tax
- Property insurance
- Heat
- Electricity
- Cable
- Repairs (to the house, or to things like a dishwasher that breaks)

You should also plan on saving a little money each month in case you need something **really** expensive – like a new roof.

If you rent the place you live, it means the money you have each month to pay for:

- Rent
- Renter's insurance
- Heat (may be included in rent)
- Electricity
- Cable
- Repairs (to things you own that break)

These are things you pay for each month. There are also things you need to pay for **before** you ever move in. If you are buying a place to live, these might be:

- Down payment
- Closing costs
- Renovations
- Furniture
- Moving
- Appliances (like a dishwasher or a stove)

If you are **renting** a place to live, these might be:

- First month's rent (so the landlord knows you have the money)
- Last month's rent (to protect the landlord if you leave without paying)
- Security deposit (to pay for any damage you might do)
- Furniture
- Moving
- Appliances (that aren't provided by the landlord)

You will need to save money ahead of time to pay for these.

What this all means is that you have to be very careful. You need to make sure you do not move in someplace you can't afford. You can work with your family, or someone you trust, to figure out how much you can afford.

Remember, roommates can help you share expenses.