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Couples share concerns, benefits of cohabitation

Thoughtful planning can help student couples decide whether or not to live under one roof

Tynan DeLong
Freelance Reporter

Cohabitation. The word alone might send couples into pre-marital paranoia. Minds race frantically with the idea of seeing the same face every waking moment. Those accustomed to Texas-sized space bubbles recoil at the utterance of "the next step." Yet, year after year, couples make the decision to live together — and reportedly 30 to 40 percent of college students do also, according to a study by author Roland Johnson, III.

Whether it means a lifetime together or a nine-

month lease that feels like a lifetime, this turning point decides the fate of many young couples. Careful planning may help couples decide if moving in together is the best idea.

Graduated senior Clay Carter said he enjoys the benefits of cohabitation.

"You're in close proximity, and you see them every night," Carter said. "As long as you get along, it's nice if you have a busy schedule."

For some students, it may be a matter of convenience.

"If it's an issue of having two houses, you might as well condense," said graduated senior Mark Zillmann, who said he and his girlfriend were always together, even when they were living apart.

"But, it's up to the individuals — whether it suits the relationship or not," he added.

Not all students have good experiences living with their significant others.

Lane Community College junior William Kistler said his first live-in experience had adverse effects on his own personal life, and it hampered the relationship's progress.

"I didn't realize it at the time, but I was so naïve," Kistler said. "Moving in together caused me to suppress the behavior I enjoyed when I was alone, and consequently, it caused our relationship to fall apart."

If the relationship fails, the friendship can often become a complementary casualty.

Eugene resident Ross

Topel, wary of cohabitation's pitfalls, said he decided against the big leap.

"I didn't do it because one of two things were going to happen," Topel said. "One, I would never hang out with or see her again because living together often does that, and two, it would screw up our friendship."

Kistler said he had those exact kinds of problems.

"I got out of the situation the minute the lease broke,"

"You need to have your own personal space. When you're living with someone, that person is invading your habitat, and it can be disastrous."

Ross Topel
Eugene resident

Kistler said. "I totally departed from our relationship, and we didn't speak for six months."

Many blame a lack of space as the point of contention for most live-in relationships. For those accustomed to living alone, inviting another to share the space can lead to unmanageable circumstances.

"It wears a couple down," junior Ashley Patterson said.

"Sharing the same space all the time doesn't leave much room to breathe."

Topel agreed.

"You need to have your own personal space," Topel said. "When you're living with someone, that person is invading your habitat, and it can be disastrous."

For those living together, however, finding a balance can be key to a healthy living situation.

"Each person needs to have their own space," said Carter. "It's easy to get bogged down when you don't allow time to yourself."

Zillmann has similar sentiment.

"She does her thing, I do mine," said Zillmann. "You need to have two different lives."

Despite the drawbacks, the number of couples cohabiting increases each year. But, some studies also show those who live together prior to marriage have higher levels of dissolution in their relationships. The study by Johnson claims "only one couple in five who cohabit ever ends up getting married."

"At all costs, people should avoid living as a couple until you're married," Kistler said. "I think it's self-destructive to domesticate prematurely and honestly, I won't be living with another girl until I get married. But if you're going to do it, think about it first."

Tynan DeLong is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

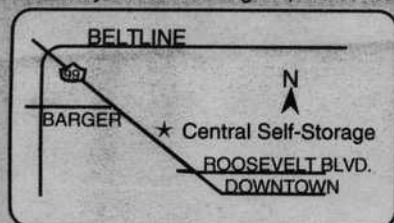


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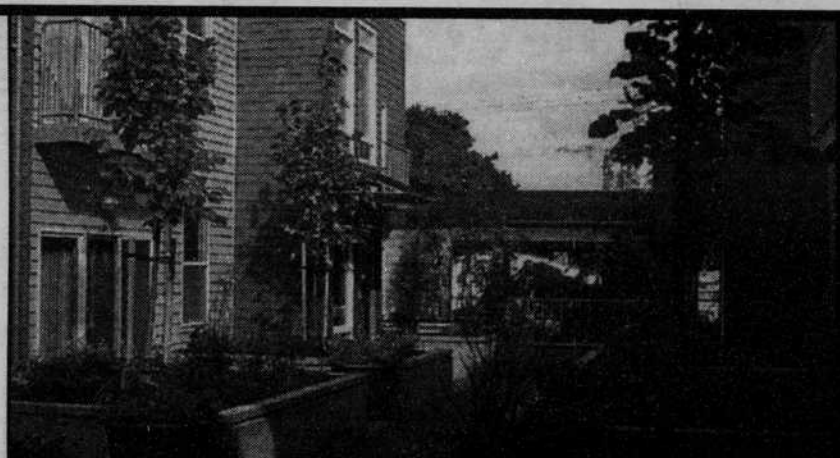
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