

Returning to the nest? Ease the way

Talk the rules over with your parents and pay some rent

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SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

With unemployment climbing in North Jersey, more renters are returning to the nest, staying with Mom and Dad until they regain their financial feathers.

Yet without some ground rules, the return flight could be turbulent because you, as a tenant, and your parents have grown accustomed to independence.

Returning home can be like setting the stage for arguments, hurt feelings, invasions of privacy and misunderstandings. That's why experts suggest smoothing the way with open communication as well as a willingness to contribute to rent, chores and other responsibilities.

"Keep the communication open," said Michelle Borden, associate executive director of NewBridge Services in Morris and Passaic counties. "It's really important to support each other and not harbor bad feelings."

The time to communicate about the rules for chores, rent, schedules and other essentials is ideally before you move back home. "One of the most important things you can do is have that conversation before you move in together," Borden said.

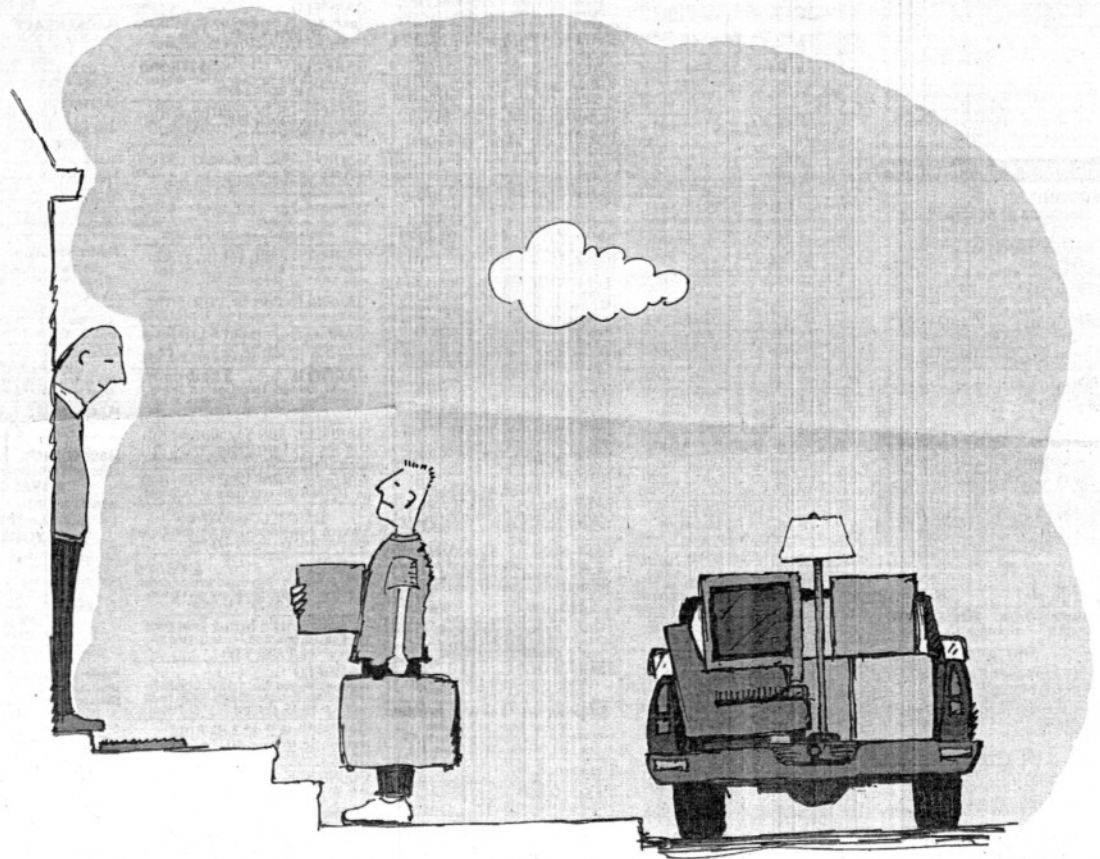
This would be the case with not only your parents' home but also the house of another relative or friend, if that's where you end up during your temporary stay.

Close quarters can magnify the different habits of different people sharing the home, sometimes threatening to put even a good relationship on a rocky path, Borden said. But taking on some of the load, like even a small portion of the rent, can go a long way to easing the adjustment, she said.

To keep the communication going, she suggested monthly family meetings, which can be an opportunity to air concerns and also to report job-hunt progress, giving parents assurance the situation is but temporary.

If you as a tenant are forced to stay with family, be aware that you may experience a flux of negative emotions because of the job loss - including depression, anger and embarrassment. But contributing to the household and setting goals for the job search will help to ease those feelings, Borden said.

Joanne Green, executive director of Mental Health Association in Passaic County, also emphasized that the success of this living arrangement rests with the



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ability to talk about concerns.

"It's not easy for someone who has had their own space," she said. "But see it as just a temporary thing, a phase you have to go through," and it will help maintain a positive outlook, needed for the job search.

Angele Leaprot, a representative of the Women's Rights Information Center in Englewood, said she works with many people who lose their housing and have no choice but to stay with relatives.

She coordinates the center's Shared Housing Program, which seeks to match women in homes they

can share. Of the 114 women who consult her annually for shared housing, she said, probably 30 percent have stayed with family to avoid homelessness.

As a key point in counseling, she said, "I always suggest still contributing to the household for as long as you can. You obviously can't pay a full rent, but you can contribute something."

Furthermore, even though they are your parents, Mom and Dad still need a measure of privacy, she said. It helps to respect their privacy and their routine.

Carol, a former Hawthorne resident, volunteers at the Women's Rights Information Center and hopes the experience will be valuable toward a new job. She's staying with parents in Paramus but said the fact that they're all adults now seems to make it easier to live separate lives.

"It's a big adjustment, but they're helping me out," said this 25-year-old college grad. "I still pay rent."

"Luckily, my parents are laid back," because their support gives her the chance to save for another rental and get her career plans back on track, she said.