

## How Does Living in Close Quarters Affect Us?

If distance makes the heart grow fonder, how do close quarters affect us? Due to flooding, many families in the Minot area have moved in with others who are graciously sharing their single family home with them and these families are experiencing the answer to that question. The answer seems to be “it depends.”

It depends on the quality of the pre-flood relationship, communication skills, personalities and temperaments, the size of the space and the number of people that are sharing that space, and the duration of the stay. As the days and weeks of living with extended family and friends turns into months, the stresses and strains of the situation may become more pronounced. Even ideal situations will be tested. Children will observe how adults cope with and handle the living arrangements. Ground rules will help set boundaries and clarify expectations. Even if you haven't discussed ground rules, it is never too late to do so and it may even alleviate some brewing tensions. For families transitioning to FEMA trailers, ground rules may help with living in a confined area.

### Consider these talking points:

**Manners Matter:** Discuss and respect one another's schedules especially in regard to bedtime and use of bathrooms. Know and honor the house rules. Is food allowed outside the kitchen, can pets be indoors, are shoes left at the door? Don't underestimate the power of please and thank you.

**Help:** Discuss how the chores of daily living will be handled. This can be difficult in a one family setting and almost overwhelming when other families are added to the mix. Decide how to handle the responsibilities of mealtime, laundry, cleaning, garbage detail and yard duties. Remember to include the young residents. If everyone does a little no one needs to do a lot.

**Finances:** There is no right way to handle the sensitive issue of money but it is important that there is a clear understanding of what type of financial help may or may not be needed. Will you help pay the rent or electricity bill, buy your own groceries, contribute laundry supplies or purchase other household supplies?

**Small Stuff:** Know that some stuff truly is small stuff. There will be difficulties and tough times when multiple families and their pets, belongings and vehicles share a dwelling meant for one family. Pick your battles carefully, let a lot roll off your back and be quick to resolve issues. Think about the situation and consider how it fits into the big picture of a community experiencing a disaster. It will probably pale in comparison-truly small stuff.

**Gratitude:** Most importantly, close quarters may bring gratefulness. As stressful as the cramped housing is, remember to express gratitude. Be grateful that you have been welcomed into another's home. Be grateful that you have a home to share and are able to be a good neighbor. Model a grateful attitude for your children. They are watching you.

*Holly M. Arnold, Region II Parent Resource Center Coordinator  
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NDSU Extension Flood Website <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/flood/>  
Flood Resources also available on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WardCountyExtension>

*NDSU Extension Service in Ward County will continue to send out Flood Response resources by email. If you do not wish to receive these emails please reply to this message.*

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