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# Living Alone for the First Time? Here's What to Expect

A beginner's guide to thriving on your own at home, from making solo decisions to building a new routine.

by Kelsey Yandura



July 2, 2020 | Living



Credit: Adobe

When Annie Gordenier and her partner split, she was left with a dog and a one-bedroom apartment.



"Having roommates was always the natural choice," she said.

Besides built-in social interaction, living with roommates was also easier on the budget. However, when Gordenier found herself living alone after a breakup, she was surprised by the profound impact it had on her personal life.

"I've become a totally different person," she said, noting increased levels of stability, confidence and introspection.



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Psychotherapist [Merle Yost](#) suggests that the transition from roommates to living solo is more than just a new type of housing situation.

"It's a change in life stages," he said. "It will change the way you think, make decisions and see yourself and the world."

## You'll begin making your own decisions.

When you start to live alone, you automatically lose your built-in decision making buds. The perennial question changes from "What do we want?" to "What do I want?"

According to Yost, if you've lived with roommates long enough, "What do I want?" can be a baffling question.

"Depending on temperament and personality, this can feel either liberating or paralyzing," he said.

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"Start with the small things," he said. "This is really your chance to step back and watch what you're doing. Notice your own process, the pros and cons of the choices you make and how you can continue to get to know yourself better."

## You'll learn to embrace introspection.

Living with roommates can help [develop your social skills](#), but it can leave young people with an underdeveloped relationship with themselves, according to [Mylea Charvat](#), a clinical neuropsychologist and neuroscientist.

"When you're living with roommates and you're constantly busy and constantly focused outward, you don't spend a lot of time inward — introspection, self examination, getting to know yourself and really figuring out who you are," Charvat said.

Gordenier noticed this in herself. While she had previously deferred to her roommates' or partner's routines and opinions, living alone gave her the space and freedom to find out who she was, independent of the influence of others. In the end, this helped her gain confidence.



**"If you're an extrovert, let yourself be alone sometimes. If you're an introvert, challenge yourself to reach out and connect with people."**

## You'll get lonely sometimes, and that's OK.

Humans are [wired for social interaction](#), which means isolation can be tough even for introverts who recharge by being alone.

"Everybody will hit loneliness to some degree, and knowing your personality type will help determine how you moderate that," Yost said.



Gordenier, an extrovert, noticed this development in herself as she transitioned to living alone.

"If I reach out immediately when I feel alone, it feeds my codependency," she said. "It would mean I don't know how to cope with feeling alone."

Instead, she schedules regular social interactions so that she has something to look forward to when she starts to feel alone.

"I acknowledge my feelings and remind myself that the feeling will end," she said.

## A routine can keep you grounded.

Your space, your rules...right? This kind of freedom can be exhilarating, but it can also leave you with a lackluster sense of routine and purpose, especially if you're stuck [quarantining at home](#).

For Gordenier, creating a [routine](#) she loved helped keep her on track.

"I don't think it matters if you think you're a 'routine person' or not," she said.

"It's the best thing for anybody because you're actively choosing to invest in yourself and make yourself better. It's the only way my mental health survived while I was unemployed [during the pandemic]."

Routine also doesn't have to be [backed by scientific studies](#) or [corporate executives](#) to

be effective. Choose whatever works best for you. Gordenier built a routine that included pulling tarot cards, going on morning runs with her dog, smoking weed and painting with watercolors.



Develop a daily routine that works for you. | Credit: Adobe



## BE MINDFUL OF YOUR FREEDOM AND PRIVACY.

Does living alone mean living free of judgment? Maybe.

Gordenier explains that, while you *can* eat that whole pizza or scroll Instagram for hours without anyone watching, the habit of indulging your guilty pleasures might result in negative self-talk.

"It's so easy when you live alone because you can keep things in secret," she said. "You can go to those dark places. My time has not been devoid of very deep and dark spirals."

For Gordenier, setting an intention at the beginning of her lease helped keep her on track.

"[Living alone] has made me a better partner and friend and daughter and sister, but I had to choose that and work for it," she said.



***Kelsey Yandura** is a freelance writer, editor and journalist based out of wherever the nearest library is (usually Denver).*

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### Why You Need to Schedule Some Alone Time

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