University Housing – University of South Carolina Lesson Plan

Strategy 3: Learning Community Initiatives – Communication Styles Community Gathering

Facilitator(s): Resident Mentors

Date (When Lesson Takes Place): September – Week 2

Target Audience(s): Floor communities

Community Involved: All

Rationale/Purpose:
The purpose of this Community Gathering is to introduce residents to their hall mates, reiterate the house rules for the floor, and to aid students in cultivating their own respectful communication style. This gathering is also a chance for Resident Mentors to set the tone for the year.

University Housing Learning Outcomes:

Awareness of Self Goal 3 – Demonstrate respectful verbal and non-verbal communication with others

- Tier 1 – Identify their own communication style
- Tier 2 – Recognize that different communication styles exist
- Tier 3 – Utilize appropriate communication styles specific to the situation

Materials/Preparation:

- Materials for social activity afterwards
- List of upcoming events/initiatives
- Materials needed to create advertising
- Index cards and pens for the “Muddiest Point” exercise
- Card Swipe Machine
- Optional: Question Ball
- Optional: Candy (M&Ms, Skittles, Jolly Ranchers, etc.)

Facilitator Guide:

1. Before the Community Gathering:
   a. Gather the materials listed above. Crafting resources can be accessed via the University Housing Resource Room located on the Garden Level of Patterson Hall.
   b. Touch base with your supervisor to:
      i. Gather important updates that need to be shared.
      ii. Discuss any purchases or funds that will be used for the community gathering.
      iii. If applicable: Discuss with your co-RM(s) how the community gathering will be executed (individually or jointly).
   c. Create a list of upcoming events/initiatives to share with the floor.
   d. Develop an innovative and engaging advertisement to publicize your community gathering. This can be anything from digital media, fliers, door clings/hangers, post-it notes, etc.

2. During the Community Gathering:
   a. Part 1: Introduction
      i. Introduce yourself and explain your responsibilities as a Resident Mentor.
      ii. Have residents introduce themselves and share some information – choose one (or more, if desired) of the ice breakers below to utilize:
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1. Two truths and a lie: Have each individual share 2 truths and 1 lie with the group, and the group must then guess which statements are true and which is the lie.

2. Question ball: Have a ball with multiple questions written on it (i.e. What is the theme song of your life?) and have the group toss it around with each other. When the person catches the ball, they must answer the question their right thumb is on.

3. Adjective/Animal name game: Have everyone introduce themselves with an adjective that starts with the same letter as their first name (i.e. Amazing Ashley) or an animal that shares the same first letter (i.e. Aardvark Ashley).

4. Cruise ship: Everyone is invited to go on a cruise with the facilitator, but they can only get on the ship if they bring certain items. The group does not know what items to bring, but the facilitator knows that group members can only bring items that start with the same letter as their first name (i.e. My name is Adam and I’m going to apples on the cruise). The goal is for everyone to figure out how to get on this exclusive trip without the facilitator revealing the secret.

5. The candy tells all: Allow residents to pick out different candy (or different color candy) and they have to answer questions associated with that candy. (i.e. If a resident takes a purple jolly rancher, they have to share their most embarrassing moment). You must prepare the questions beforehand and decide which color/type of candy each is associated with.

6. Move your butt: Form a circle with one person in the center (it is suggested to have the facilitator be the first person). The person in the center makes a statement that is true about themselves and others in the group followed by “move your butt!” (i.e. If you’re wearing flip flops, move your butt). Everyone must then move to a different place in the circle, and the person left without a space is the new person in the middle.

   i. Explain to residents what “House Rules” are: a discussion of community expectations for the floor/area. The RM and the residents will come together after a few weeks of living together and determine expectations of each other in the community. Ask residents to begin thinking about goals for the community, ground rules and expectations of the community, and community responsibility.

b. Part 3: Communication Styles
   i. This is a great time to begin a discussion about communication styles. Not everyone communicates in the same way. This is the first time (for many of the residents) that they have lived away from home and with people they do not fully know.
   ii. After each activity has been completed, ask the residents the follow-up questions listed below each activity. Allow each group to think about it and have a few people share their answers. The questions following the “what-so what-now what?” model. Choose two of the following activities to complete.

1. Familiar & Unique: Break off into small groups (ideally by counting off). Each small group must come up with 5 things that the group members have in common. Then ask each group member to share something unique about his/her self. The group shares then their familiar and unique features with the rest of the group.
   a. How did you communicate to the group what you may have in common with them?
   b. How did your group come to a consensus on the familiar characteristics?
   c. Was it difficult to determine what was familiar? Why or why not?
2. Theme Song: Divide residents into smaller groups. Tell them to discuss among themselves until they find a common theme. Once they've got a common theme, have them come up with a theme song that explains that theme. Then, they share their theme song with the larger group and the larger group has to guess their common theme.
   a. How did you communicate to the group what you may have in common with them?
   b. How did your group come to a consensus on the common theme?
   c. Was it difficult to determine a theme song? Why or why not?

3. Birthday Line-up: Ask everyone to line up according to the month and day of birth without any talking. This should inspire some interesting means of communication while working towards a common goal. When everyone is in line, have each person share their birthday to determine if they are successful.
   a. How did you communicate with your fellow hall mates to determine their birthday?
   b. How did you communicate your birthday?
   c. Was this activity difficult? Why or why not?

4. Hometown Line-up: Ask everyone to line up according to how far away their hometown is from Columbia, SC without any talking. This should inspire interesting means of communication while working towards a common goal. When everyone is in line, have each person share their hometown to determine if they are successful.
   a. How did you communicate with your fellow hall mates to determine the location of their hometown?
   b. How did you communicate where your hometown is located?
   c. Was this activity difficult? Why or why not?

iii. Emphasize that each person has their own communication style and it is important to recognize that different communication styles exist among the hall and in each room/suite/apartment.

iv. Encourage residents to begin thinking about the communication styles they utilized and observed during the activities as they complete roommate contracts and the House Rules.

v. Go over the real world examples below to prompt residents to think about the conflicts they may encounter while living in the residence hall. The residents can pair up with their roommates/suite-mates/apartment-mates to generate discussion.
   1. Your roommate(s)/suite-mate(s)/apartment-mate(s) like to sleep late and stay up late. You have to be quiet in the mornings while getting ready but when your roommate comes in late, he/she turns on the light and makes noise while you are trying to sleep.
      a. What would you do in this situation?
      b. How would you share your concerns with your roommates considering your communication style?
      c. What if your roommate’s communication style is different from yours?
   2. Your roommate(s)/suite-mate(s)/apartment-mate(s) are eating your food/taking your clothes/using your shampoo and body wash without your permission.
      a. What would you do in this situation?
      b. How would you share your concerns with your roommates considering your communication style?
      c. What if your roommate’s communication style is different from yours?
3. Your roommate(s)/suite-mate(s)/apartment-mate(s) have visitors over almost every night of the week and you begin to feel uncomfortable with the amount of visitors he/she has over and how long they are staying in your room/suite/apartment.
   a. What would you do in this situation?
   b. How would you share your concerns with your roommates considering your communication style?
   c. What if your roommate’s communication style is different from yours?
4. Your roommate(s)/suite-mate(s)/apartment-mate(s) leave dirty dishes in the room/sink and do not take out the trash regularly.
   a. What would you do in this situation?
   b. How would you share your concerns with your roommates considering your communication style?
   c. What if your roommate’s communication style is different from yours?
5. Your roommate(s)/suite-mate(s)/apartment-mate(s) are posting negative comments about you/one of your friends on social media.
   a. What would you do in this situation?
   b. How would you share your concerns with your roommates considering your communication style?
   c. What if your roommate’s communication style is different from yours?

a. Part 4: Hall Updates
   i. Provide residents with any important updates that are/will be occurring in the hall.
      1. Upcoming events and building initiatives:
         a. Community-wide, LLC specific, CET, Hall Government, etc.
      2. Date and time range of next community gathering.
      3. Important building updates from your supervisor.

d. Part 5: Muddiest Point Exercise
   i. Hand out one index card to each resident.
   ii. Explain the purpose of each side of the card:
      1. Side 1: What is your muddiest point from today’s community gathering? This is the side where residents can ask for a clarification or a question that was sparked from the community gathering.
      2. Side 2: What was your biggest take-away from today’s community gathering?
   iii. Collect the index cards and create a word document with the questions and take-always for your supervisor. Answers to questions can be emailed out to residents after the meeting.

e. Part 6: Social Activity
   i. This is a chance for you to use your RM community development funds. A list of appropriate activities is listed below, but it is not comprehensive. If you want to something that isn’t on this list, it must be pre-approved by your supervisor.
      1. Baking cookies/cupcakes/brownies for your residents and allowing them to mingle on the floor.
      2. Floor Dinner.
         a. Example: Ordering pizza/other foods for a meal.
      3. Take your students to Yoghut, Russell House, etc. as a floor outing.
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3. After the Community Gathering:
   a. Begin to chat one on one with residents about their Roommate Agreement. All materials will be provided to you by your supervisor.
   b. Process the “Muddiest Point” index cards by synthesizing common themes and answering questions that are still lingering on the floor. Send any major themes to your supervisor via email.
   c. Submit an Interaction Form.

Assessment:
1. “Muddiest Point” assessment exercise.
2. Interaction Form.