

# ON YOUR OWN BUT NOT ALONE



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*How I learned to deal with roommates, late nights, and pitfalls of living on my own.*

As I prepared to go to college, I happily anticipated living away from home for the first time. One of my best friends was going to be my roommate, and I imagined cooking meals, making friends, and studying hard in a place that felt like home.

I had a rude awakening. In my apartment I often overheard shocking conversations and discovered how different my other roommates' standards were from mine. This environment was definitely not the type of home I was used to.

Whether your first experience away from home is uplifting, challeng-

ing, or both, thriving spiritually should be your top priority. Here are ways I learned to find joy while living on my own.

**Attend institute.** President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled, "Every college and university student should take advantage of the institute program."<sup>1</sup> I can attest to the value of this counsel. As I attended classes and activities, both my classmates and my teachers influenced me. They helped me feel the Spirit and bolstered my resolve to uphold Church standards. When you are living in unfamiliar surroundings, institute can be a spiritual haven.

**Turn to the Lord.** Pondering the Lord's words in the scriptures, recording notes in a scripture study journal,

and prayerfully applying what I read helped me forge a stronger relationship with our Heavenly Father. Because I attended school near a temple, I often walked the two miles there and performed baptisms for the dead or simply experienced the peaceful feelings on the grounds. I know that as we adopt solid personal scripture study habits, pray often, and—when possible—attend the temple, we'll find peace wherever we are.

**Nurture family ties.** I'm grateful my mother reminded me to keep nurturing relationships as she often called me and sent cards. Communicating with people who love us can dispel loneliness and offer security while we are adjusting to a new place. Even when surrounded by friends, we can remember the eternal nature of family relationships and give them a high priority by keeping in touch.

**Do your part—and then some.** As most people living with roommates discover, it is harder to keep a place clean when no one is “in charge.” Roommates should cooperate to assign jobs fairly and follow through on their responsibilities. Failing to do your part may not only damage roommate relationships but also contribute to a chaotic and depressing environment. I quickly learned that

satisfaction from a tidy living space was worth the time spent achieving it, even if it meant I sometimes pitched in out of turn. I could study better, sleep more deeply, and feel happier when my apartment was orderly.

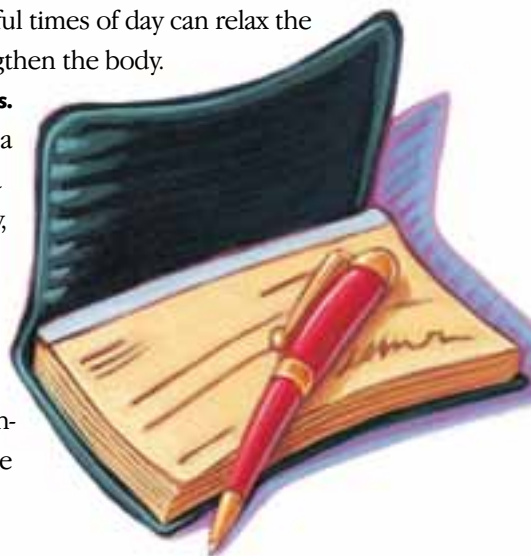
**Practice healthy habits.** Maintaining spiritual strength, especially in challenging circumstances, requires the cooperation of the body. When you are exhausted, it is easy to become spiritually complacent and physically ill.

Many exciting social opportunities for young single adults occur in the evenings, and I've learned to take advantage of them in moderation. The counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 88:124 applies even to college students: “Retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.”

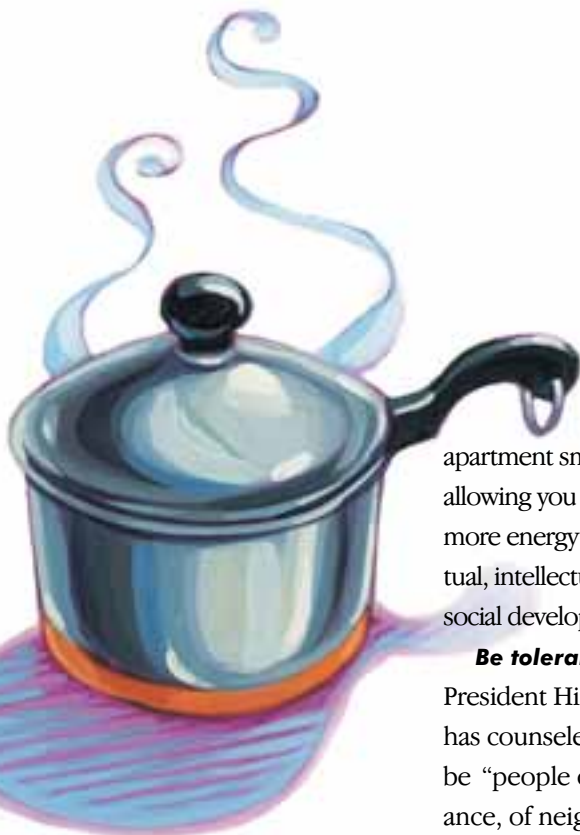
Regularly getting outdoors invigorated me too, whether I went jogging, Rollerblading, or hiking. Students may spend a lot of time scurrying to class, but additional exercise at less stressful times of day can relax the mind as well as strengthen the body.

**Learn practical skills.**

I learned to live within a strict budget, balance a checkbook, do laundry, and cook a few meals before I moved away from home. It helped! Preparation in these areas can make the transition from home to the







apartment smoother, allowing you to focus more energy on spiritual, intellectual, and social development.

**Be tolerant.**

President Hinckley has counseled us to be “people of tolerance, of neighborliness, of appreciation and kindness toward others.”<sup>2</sup> Not everyone we associate with through our educational or professional endeavors will live by standards we accept, but we can appreciate everyone’s strengths and good qualities. Though my roommates were sometimes offensive, at other times they opened my eyes in a positive way to different backgrounds, perspectives, and life experiences. I hope I did the same for them as we discussed my beliefs. Despite our differences, I loved my roommates and appreciated their diversity.



Tolerance does not mean accepting sinful behaviors or ignoring problems. In extreme circumstances, it may be necessary to change living arrangements and find a more wholesome environment. But in most cases, we can generally try to understand a roommate’s viewpoint and receive the same respect in return. Building a foundation of

respect with others makes it easier to address problems in the right spirit when they arise.

**Reach out.**

I always admire newcomers who introduce themselves and make an effort to quickly become involved. It takes being willing to abandon our self-consciousness to thrive in a new place. We can introduce ourselves to others at church, work, or class, and we can express a willingness to serve. The Church callings we receive might be different from the ones we’ve fulfilled in our home wards, and we can welcome the opportunity for growth.

As we take the time to serve and be friendly, we’ll not only support others but also build a network of support for ourselves. Make others feel at home, and soon you’ll feel at home in your new place.

Before I moved away from home, I imagined cooking meals, making friends, and studying hard in a place that felt like home. Eventually all those things happened. As I learned to take care of myself, my surroundings, and my relationships—especially my relationship with Heavenly Father—I found that home can be wherever you make it. If you prepare yourself practically and spiritually, you’ll discover valuable experiences in your home away from home. ■

**NOTES**

1. “Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, 67.
2. “The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 81.

