Feature Writing

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Living Alone… Fun or Miserable?

Pushing the door closed with her hip, Tara Nagelschmitz heaved the black heavy trash bags higher from the ground as she made her way out of her apartment building. After dumping her trash bags, she turned to head back into the warmth of her home. Then she realized her mistake; she forgot her keys. She glanced quickly to her left and right. No one was around, just the cold and darkness surrounding everything. She furiously rubbed her hands together to try and stay warm and began running her hands through her hair several times in order to calm herself. Tara looked up to her apartment on the first floor and her heart skip a beat when she saw that luck was on her side for she had left the balcony window open. She climbed onto her neighbor’s balcony and then swiftly leapt unto hers. Seeing as both balconies were separated by less than a meter meant she would not be spending the night on the street.

“I was really really lucky that one time for most neighbors were probably asleep and I didn’t even have my phone,” said Tara. “Sometimes living alone is such a pain.”

From flooding kitchens to spilling milk all over the stove to getting robbed because of forgetfulness, living alone and away from parents is not always fun. Tara Nagelschmitz is one of many Saint Louis Madrid students who live by themselves and for the first time in their lives have to face life without having their parents’ help. Many undergraduate students move into their own apartments when they start college and come to realize just how much work it is to maintain a household. Nothing can be taken for granted anymore, and if you forget to take out the trash it will sit, rot and wait for you until you remember it.

Doing the laundry, cleaning, cooking, shopping for groceries, setting up the alarm systems, paying the rent… the list seems endless and many students are clueless, me included, as to how most things work. Some students’ first times doing the household chores can become funny anecdotes, which can be looked back on and laughed at or they could turn into stories worth forgetting.

For those of us who still live with our parents, we may find these stories even funnier for we cannot relate to them. However, many students live alone and have been through ups and downs and have managed to keep their houses from burning down and may feel very accomplished. Sooner or later, all of us will have to live on our own and experience life as individuals without the safety or protection of parents. Those students who have managed to garner the living alone experience are a step ahead of the rest of us, but that does not mean everything went smoothly.

For Kimberly Killick, the washing machine was like the far, distant and mysterious land where clothes go from being dirty to clean in a matter of minutes; however she and the washing
machine were not acquainted with each other until she moved into her own apartment. A random day found Kim in her kitchen wiping some final bubbles off the sink, when the noise of the washing machine just stopped. Thinking the clothes were now ready, she pulled the machine’s door open, only to have water spill onto her lap and spread all over the kitchen floor and seep into the hallway carpets.

“Oh God, it was such a mess, there was water literally everywhere, it took us so long to get it all dried up again,” said Kimberly. “The worst part was the clothes were not even completely washed.”

Nada Tahiri has had a similar experience with having to clean up messes due to her inexperience. This being Nada’s first time ever living alone meant she had never cooked anything, and naturally when she attempted the difficult task of heating milk in a saucepan, it boiled over and created a huge mess. The milk spilled all over the stove, and leaking through the cupboards and into the drawers; it was not pretty.

“What was even worse was trying to clean it all up, because I hate dirty things so I tried to clean it all up immediately, but the milk was boiling and the stove was too hot to touch and I only had one dishrag so it took me forever,” said Nada. “What a nightmare!”

Nevertheless, according to Margarita Davlyatshina, living alone is not such a terrible thing. Having a mother that is always busy travelling means she spends most of her time living alone and although it may get lonely, she does not mind it.

“When you live alone it’s wonderful because you don’t have the responsibility of taking care of anyone else or worrying about doing things that may bother the others,” said Margarita. “I think living alone is better than living with a roommate you can’t stand.”

However, some students enjoy a challenge and others hate it, but for Nada EL-Khalidi it’s all about the learning experience. Nada, who has been living alone for several years now, told me at first she felt very homesick, wanting to go home every day and calling her parents up to three times a day, but after some time, she got used to it and now cherishes her independence.

“I mean sure, it’s hard to manage a household and study and keep up with your social life, but this is life, and parents can’t be around forever to take care of you,” said Nada. “Although in the beginning it was tough, I would not change this experience for anything in the world for independence has taught me so much more about life than my parents, professors or textbooks could have.”