



## CHALLENGING SITUATIONS AND ANSWERS/SUGGESTIONS



Situation #1: Relationships- How to support your house member when they are going through a difficult one.

- Follow AA's suggestions of not getting involved with a relationship for 1 year.
- Suggest the house member develop a relationship with a sponsor; or other house members.
- Take this time for you and put your recovery first.
- Principles before personalities.
- Create house activities/group activities to strengthen the house (meetings, dinners, shows, outside events).
- Share your experience, strength and hope, about your relationship experiences in recovery.
- Encourage good relationships, we can sometimes see a keeper before she can; Take the chance, We have your back.
- Oxford House Alumni; Support Meeting and encourage alumni involvement.

Situation #2: Attitudes Women not being supportive of each other and not liking each other and handling the emotional roller coaster when new members come into the house.

- Establish Written House Rules/ Newcomer Packets.
- Practice the Buddy System and never chop your buddy.
- Remember when you moved in? New members are raw and out of sync with how this house functions.
- Lead by example- No gossip, tit for tatting.
- Use listening statements "Is this what you meant to say? This is what I heard?"
- Debate on behavioral contract-Our group feels it needs to be done early not as last resort.
- Need to break down in simple, specific terms.
- Chapter involvement.

Situation #3: Jealousy of one another due to our low self esteem.

- Let person talk at the house meeting, it allows the person feeling jealous feel comfortable.
- Remind them that everyone began at a similar level.
- Newcomers should feel like the most important.
- Befriend the person, have them talk about themselves.
- Encourage that person to get involved, help them regain their self esteem.
- Need to find acceptance of oneself and their own individuality.
- Draw a name and say three good things about that person.
- Unity Day-pick a day of the week to get together.
- Care and share.



Situation #4: Cat fights-amongst each other over trivial things and past events

- President of House acts as mediator.
- Have an emergency meeting for Disruptive Behavior and put on Behavioral Contract.
- Make the individuals spent time together (Just for Today Reading, Eating and Meeting).
- Get women to communicate and spend time together.
- Whole house on contract to attend so many meetings.
- Need to talk in house meeting.
- Try to stay within house.

Situation #5: Awareness of when men are in the house and how it affects some women who are not comfortable with men for whatever reason.

- Establish the individuals in the house, who may have issues with men, and out of respect bring the idea of having a male guest to the table, asking for permission.
- Establish a set time notifying all house members of when your male friend is visiting and wait for feedback or issues from any opposing members.
- Establish House Rule: NO MEN if any member is uncomfortable.
- Establish House Rule: NO MEN staying the night.
- Establish House Rule: MEN only in main living area.
- Be open minded to women's past issues with men and brainstorm on ideas how the house as a whole can be supportive on a case by case basis.
- Case by case, asks the member to have their male guest leave. Then have a house meeting to find out what is going on with member and how your house can help.

Situation #6: Case building that causes the house to continually be in turmoil and how to wean it out.

- Have a sponsor/sponsee meeting between the two conflicting members within 48 hours report back to the house with a resolution, then behavioral contract.
- Call a meeting.
- Vote for expulsion out of the house.
- Get put on a behavioral contract.
- Sponsor/Sponsee dinner and have a mini 4<sup>th</sup> step.
- Make the two conflicting members room together.

Situation #7: How do we handle an older resident who makes others in the house think it is their house because they have been there a long time and intimidate the newcomer.

- Have a house meeting, and bring the person's behavior to the table, clearly describe and outline the responsibilities of all those in office, and the rights of each member. Reinforce the fact that there are no bosses in Oxford.
- Come to the table with examples of what this member is doing that makes others feel uncomfortable and have each member address the person in a constructive manner, if member shows no signs of behavioral change, have an emergency meeting, initiate a behavioral contract and if no sign of change, expulsion.



- Invite Outreach Worker to intervene about explosive or emotional issues and ask for assistance with solution.
- When dealing with confrontation always use honesty, compassion and respect.
- When expressing personal opinions keep expressions in the first person.
- Reinforce that no one is more important than the other.
- Bring up at meeting, discuss issues at meeting and give the person one week to resolve their behavioral issue, create a behavior contract and discuss Oxford House Traditions.

Situation #8: How the house can inspire the new resident to the Oxford House concept who act as if they are still on the streets.

- Have a house meeting, and bring the person's behavior to the table, clearly describe and outline the expectations for each house members mannerisms and behaviors.
- Review House rules and manual.
- Upon admittance into the house have the House Rules and Expectations read and signed by new member and address issues of mannerisms if offensive behaviors arise.
- Talk with Member.
- Keeping the member in check by having older members explain Oxford Concepts.
- Other houses visit home.
- Fines or No fines.
- Use Chapter, Use Outreach and Use Alumni.

Situation #9: What to do with people who are waiting to receive disability and their rental assistance from agencies has run out? How much should they be allowed to get behind in their EES?

- At most 1 month. Oxford House members all understand the issue of financial difficulties; however, Oxford House also has house obligations and rent to pay for all members. Being behind on EES, which assists with the house rent payments, cable bill, light bill, etc, will create feeling of animosity and resentment between members who are "working" and paying rent, while others are not working and waiting" for financial/rent assistance checks. It will eventually be seen as "taking advantage" of the house. If the member can not pay rent after one month, they should be asked to find other living arrangements. Oxford House is not a boarding house; we all are trying to become productive and responsible members of society.
- Rent payments are discussed at each house meeting. Members democratically vote for a member to pay rent at another time.
- Unemployed/Disabled members pay 1 months rent, plus a little more.
- Democratic vote for members behind in rent. It should be done on an individual basis and dependant on circumstance.
- Members know from the time of the interview that they need to have a way to pay the rent; part of being responsible is having a way to pay your rent even when your agency money runs out.

Situation #10: How do you handle members in the house who are always negative about everything and making a mountain out of a molehill about everything?



- Have a "Care"frontation. In a house meeting setting discuss with the member in question that behavior you see in them. Explain your concerns in a constructive manner. Give them a chance to reflect and see, and make changes in their behaviors themselves. If their behavior continues to be an issue in the house, maybe a contract is needed. The contract could include a sponsor, a set amount of meetings a week, identifying their particular behavior as a disruptive behavior (to the house) and letting them know behaving in that manner could potentially be grounds for dismissal. Also require individual to participate actively in house positions.
- Suggest they see a therapist or mental health counselor.
- Involve your Chapter's Officer if issue continues to disrupt the house.

Situation #11: What is an appropriate guideline for overnight male guest visitation that will not make everyone feel that Oxford is a boarding house?

- Introduce guest to your housemates....establish a "get to know him" timeline before he is allowed to spend the night.
- Ask for house's permission before male guest stays over.
- If one person is uncomfortable then the guest doesn't stay overnight.
- Male guests need to be fully clothed in any common area.
- Behavior contracts for women who have multiple sexual partners. Initiate curfew again.
- No dating other roommates or ex-partners.
- No overnight guests in shared rooms.
- Use the "3 in, 3 out, 1 night alone- rule.
- Do not leave guest unattended in the house especially if you are not there.
- Establish a set time notifying all house members of when your male friend is visiting and wait for feedback or issues from any opposing members.

Situation #12: What can be done about stealing when it is not apparent who really is doing it but assumptions are great from everyone for a particular person? How do you find out whom and keep the house calm?

- Harbored negative feelings will create resentments that will eventually explode in words, attitudes and in interaction between house members, especially the suspected house member. As a house, confront the "issue" not the person, and give examples of why you feel the way that you do, being honest about how you "feel" and giving examples of why you feel that way. After the discussion, gauge the frequency of the behavior and if it continues and there is a particular person you have in mind, confront that person.
- Room searches
- Significant others banned from house.
- If no one admits to it, fine the whole house.
- Ask member to return items anonymously-no questions asked.
- Ask in "general" at house meeting; ask for the person who took the item to return the item.
- Eviction- after admission.
- Behavior contracts to assist individual on that particular issue.
- Nanny Cam
- Community shelf with food and toiletries for new members.



- NO privileges for the whole house for 30 days.

Situation #13: What is a good model for conducting an interview without seeming as if you and the house are drug counselors for the interviewee?

- Initially, all members should be empathetic and remember how you felt when you were being interviewed. As an icebreaker, or even throughout the questions, share a little bit about yourself, or identify with the answers to the questions to make them feel relaxed, head nod or a reassuring look may ease the nervousness. Be a little personable to allow their natural personalities to appear during the interview.
- Prior to interview, conversation, meeting and greeting, offering drinks or snacks to interviewee.
- Let them know what they can get out of being in an Oxford House is what they put into it.

Situation #14: How do you get women to open up during mediation (or house meeting) when they can talk to everyone else about the member, but can't seem to confront the member themselves?

- At the end of the house meeting address the feelings and issues with house members.
- Help them to learn how to have relationships with women.
- Letting it go until meeting.
- Confront someone in a loving and caring way.
- Put it on the table to discuss at house meeting, **only** discuss issues at house meeting.

Situation #15: Helpless behavior- How do you help out, but not enable someone who always says "I can't" or "I don't think I know how to do that?"

- Encourage member to spend more time in service work.
- When we help others with solutions to their problems, we become more confident to solve our own problems and have less time to think of ourselves.
- Be honest about how you feel about the behavior, assist them once or twice, and afterwards let them know, you would like them to try it on their own because you feel they would benefit by trying to do the task on their own.

Situation #16: How do you handle an Oxford Sister who uses your house as a revolving door? She keeps relapsing and coming back. What is "policy?"

- Refer individual to another Oxford House and if she doesn't work it out in the second house she may need to get put out.
- Let individual know that the house has lost trust.
- Pray for her.
- Let her know that your particular house isn't for her.



- Outside Counseling.
- Have her surrender.
- Go back to treatment. Longer treatment program.
- Learn how to take suggestions and use them.
- Phone always available for her. Call us.
- She is sending us through drama.
- Putting everyone's lives in jeopardy.
- We can't help you anymore.
- Too much on the house's plate. A sick house is a bad house.

Situation #17: How does a house handle children *who* misbehave, when the mothers won't discipline them?

- As a house, address the term "disruptive behavior" and let her know that her child's misbehaving and her not establishing rules or boundaries with her child while co-habiting with other individuals is classified as disruptive behavior. Address possible solutions with the parent and come to a mutual agreement about what will be tolerated and what will not be tolerated by house members. May call for a contract which needs to be signed and agreed upon by individual before extreme consequences such as dismissal from house.

Situation #18: What to do when mothers expect other women in the house to baby-sit their kids?

- Start first by establishing rules and expectations in regards to women with children. Inform mothers that "baby sitting" for them is a privilege earned and should not be viewed as an expectation. If they have built a rapport with house members, they should respect the house members by either asking or proactively coming up with alternatives for childcare in the event a house member will not/can not baby sit. Perhaps the house can provide a list of babysitters or childcare facilities for mothers. Remind them nicely about the child being "their responsibility".

Situation# 19: Should women in houses date their roommate's ex-boyfriends or ex-husbands?

- We are women in recovery, dating someone's ex is unacceptable behavior. That is something we did when we were still out there using.
- We are now "Sisters in recovery"...treat each other like you would your own Sister.
- It is disruptive to the house...possible contract.
- If the perpetrator is a newcomer, try to encourage her to work on herself for the first year and not worry about dating. (If she gets a sponsor in her first 30 days that will be instilled)
- Some houses incorporate "House Ethics" Dating other members ex's is off limits.



Situation # 20: What would the house do if one of the women came home and said they had gotten a job as a bartender or cocktail waitress at one of the local clubs?



- It is **STRONGLY** suggested in the program and Oxford House to NOT put yourself in "slippery" places that would trigger you to drink or use again.
- Breathalyzers upon returning from work and random UA's.
- Suggest other options in the same field such as being a waitress or hostess, etc.
- Remind her of the "Barber shop" scenario.... "If you hang out in a barber shop long enough...you are bound to get a haircut."
- We as a house can not tell our members where they can or can not work. As long as it is not illegal or immoral. (Such as prostitution, stripping, drug dealing, etc. these are all unacceptable "jobs".)