

Dear Darling,

I have a roommate who will not stop talking to me very loudly about the same topics I do not care about in great detail. I can't go into the common areas for more than a minute when they're home without them coming out of their room to talk to me. It bothers me because they don't care at all if I have something to contribute to the conversation- in fact I've started just leaving conversations when I want to and they keep talking to themselves for about 20 minutes after I've left. I fear it's a classic case of our neurodiversities clashing but I feel so evil that it bothers me so much. How do I bring up to them that it bothers me that they don't care to try to have a conversation with me and I feel uncomfortable to try to exist in my house?

-I don't want to hear about my roommate's detailed plan to schedule their wisdom tooth appointment for the 7th time

Dearest Beleaguered Roommate,

Experiencing trials with roommates almost seems to be a rite of passage, but that doesn't mean it's ever easy. Each situation is unique and can stir up so many different emotions. I'll start off by saying that you are not evil for having these thoughts. Feeling judgmental of someone isn't wrong, but there are ways to make sure you express what you need in a productive way. You deserve to set boundaries! Whether it's family, friends, lovers, or strangers, living with others can be a rollercoaster. It's a constant storm of personalities, and it's clear that you have been caught in the undertow of one.

You may be sharing a space, but that doesn't mean either of you should sacrifice your well-being. Compromise is possible, imperative even, to a healthy living situation. Sometimes it's a schedule to do chores or a policy on guests, but it can also be an understanding on when to leave someone be. When life is

exhausting, coming home and getting settled can be a balm to the soul. That sacred calm being interrupted is understandably difficult. Being direct, but kind, is always the best bet for someone who may not be aware of how they are affecting you. Since getting a word in edgewise is a concern, a more subtle approach such as wearing headphones could give them pause about your availability to have such conversations with them. If you're struggling to bring it up or want to get everything down in one place, perhaps write a letter. That letter could even just be for yourself, as a way to organize your thoughts. When unspoken concerns are allowed to stew, they can turn into something intense indeed. Though taking the initiative to reach out to someone is daunting, it can address problems further down the line. No matter how your roommate responds, asserting your needs is always an accomplishment. You will have flexed an important muscle that will benefit you throughout life's many adventures, and you can be proud of that.

—Darling Tonia's Assistant