

If you feel these rules are too strict then possibly Oxford House is not for you. These rules are proven to work if followed. Changing the rules to fit your needs is doing things your way and by doing things your way life became very difficult. Why not try doing things the Oxford House way and see how simple life can be.

It is the mission of the Chapter to ensure that each Oxford House is providing a place for recovery. The primary vehicle for ensuring this is by stressing the importance of living up to Charter granted to member houses by Oxford House, Inc.

In keeping with the Oxford House, Inc. Tradition Three, the following acts are grounds for immediate expulsion:

1. A relapse into the use of alcohol or drugs
2. The failure to pay any fees (rent, fines, etc.) owed.
3. The exhibition of disruptive behavior

For the purpose of General Rules of Expulsion, the following definition of "Disruptive Behavior" is used: Disruptive behavior includes participating in any criminal activity such as drug trafficking, prostitution, shoplifting, assault, and theft within the house or any other activity, which may threaten the standing of the Oxford House in the community. In addition, violence or any threat of violence, or destruction of property, is considered disruptive behavior. Exhibitions of any part of the above definition of disruptive behavior by members of chartered Oxford Houses should, without question, result in immediate expulsion.

Suggested Guidelines for Expulsion

Members who relapse or refuse to pay equal share of expenses, or are guilty of the above definition of disruptive behavior must be expelled as quickly as the house deems appropriate (a majority vote of all house members is needed for expulsion). In the case of behavioral problems, houses should institute systems of fines, probations or warnings. If there are repeated behavioral offenses and the house, by democratic vote, deems the behavioral acts of the member are not conducive to recovery, then dismissal procedures could take place.

Unused equal share of expenses is always returned to members who are expelled for whatever reason. If unsure check with Chapter, Outreach, or Oxford House Inc. Any house member who feels he/she is being unfairly asked to leave an Oxford House may appeal to the Chapter Housing Service Committee to mediate the dispute. The Chapter House Service Committee will then suggest a solution to the full committee for a vote. It is not guaranteed that the Committee will act upon any and all requests for appeal. It should be emphasized that if at all possible internal conflicts should be worked out at the House level and brought to the Chapter House Service Committee only as a last resort.

Disruptive behavior versus behavioral problems

It seems each house decides, based on the healthiness of the recovery in the house, what constitutes a behavioral problem and what is disruptive. Many Chapters and Associations have established guidelines for disruptive behavior that constitute possible expulsion, but some individuals in houses still make up their own self-serving rules. A behavioral problem connected to the process of recovery can be as mundane as a result of an incomplete chore or as significant as isolation in the midst

of the psychological trauma of the fourth step.

A personality conflict with another member, an unhealthy relationship, and any other part of our old behaviors are examples of behavior problems. Change is a vital part of a healthy recovery. Change does not imply the other individual but you. Each of us is at our own level of growth and acceptance - "Live and Let Live" The one personality defect that we can control is our attitude. We often hear the old adage of drinking of life from a half empty or a half full cup. Shifting the focus on someone else's behavior leaves us void of honesty about ourselves. If you take the "me" out of blame, all you have is "bla, bla, bla." The only inventory we should be concerned with is our own. Oxford is intended to act as a surrogate family and a support system; it is neither a treatment program nor a dictatorial entity.

We have no bosses in Oxford House. It does not mean that someone is not an important part of the family if for some reason their behavior does not coincide with yours. Oxford House should be a safe haven. We must always put principles before personality. The welfare of the entire house and the principles of our tradition should come first. Many of us choose to use a 12-step program. This teaches us that service to other alcoholics and addicts is a vital part of our own recovery. What greater opportunity could we have that helping a roommate explore solutions to their behavioral problem?

Suggested Guidelines for Behavior Modification

Many houses use a contract, fines, and revocation of certain privileges or probation when someone displays repeated behaviors that could be construed as disruptive to the house as a whole. An example of revoking special privileges might be for someone who doesn't clean up after themselves in the kitchen or laundry area would be having an earlier curfew for the week. Fines could be for non-completion of a chore or a late fee for tardy rent. A contract might be used after warnings or previous discussion about a certain behavior that is disrupting the serenity of the house or is putting the individual in jeopardy of relapse. The members of the house should write out the offending behaviors and the individual under contract writes the means by which they will take to correct it. The contract is intended as a tool to aid the offender, not as a punishment.

Definitions of Relapse

Relapse can come in different forms - the easiest one to deal with is the "for sure" relapse when a member comes in obviously intoxicated or high on drugs, and admits relapse. Because there is no denial to deal with, the other members have the time to concentrate on getting help for this resident. However, there are more difficult types of relapse. Many relapses can only be discerned by looking at behavior change, late payment of rent, lapse in doing chores, argumentative or isolating behaviors, these are all warning signs. Remember to keep principles above personalities and think with your head and not your heart. Another form of relapse is misusing prescription or over the counter drugs. Drugs must be taken according to prescriptions or directions and residents who are getting prescriptions should inform the doctor of his/her addict status. Another form of relapse is when a member is using and others know about it and do not blow the whistle. In this case, all who are using and all who knew about it are considered a relapse.

Conflict Resolution

Accountability and confrontation are necessary to maintain a safe and serene environment. Conflicts will arise and the sooner they are addressed, the easier it will be to discover a solution. Be aware of how accountability and confrontation are presented. Remember to come from a place of love

and compassion. Tone and approach dictate the receptiveness of the individual on the receiving end. Follow these steps to resolve conflicts within the house. As you go down the list, begin with step 1. If the conflict remains, move on to the following steps, until the conflict is resolved. If the conflict poses a serious threat to the safety of any or all members, then skip to the last steps.

STEP 1: Communicate one-on-one with the individual(s) who is/are believed to be producing the conflict.

STEP 2: If direct communication does not work, speak with the house President or another member of the house who does not have a biased opinion on the situation. Find a mediator to help resolve the conflict.

STEP 3: Bring up the conflict during the weekly house meeting. If the conflict needs immediate attention, have an emergency meeting called to discuss the problem.

1. Do not spend too much time discussing the problem. Move quickly into solutions once the problem has been established.
2. Allow everyone an opportunity to share freely and openly, without interruption, on how they feel about the conflict and possible solutions.
3. Review the house guidelines, House Manual, and other resources for suggestions.
4. Utilize the democratic process to agree on a solution, respecting the majority decision.
5. The Secretary should document the conflict, discussion, and solution along with votes of all motions.
6. Stick with the decision of the house. Carry out the solution agreed upon.

STEP 4: Contact Chapter representatives to sit in on a house meeting to give unbiased suggestions on how to find a solution and move forward.

STEP 5: Contact the local Outreach Rep. to sit in on a house meeting to give unbiased suggestions on how to find a solution and move forward.