



Who Ya Gonna Call?

Facilitator Guide



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Session 1 - Overview

The quality of this curriculum can definitely be enhanced when led by an individual who feels comfortable with an appropriate measure of self-disclosure related to his/her own experience with living independently.

- *Welcome class participants & introduce yourself.*
- *Explain the class schedule, providing a hand out with the schedule of meetings, including the length of each class.*
- *Explain that it is a closed group, meaning that once it starts, new participants cannot join until the next 10-week session. Absences are acceptable but discouraged. Make the point that there are many, many factors that prepare one for living independently, particularly for the first time. Hence, attending all the sessions will enhance one's sense of preparedness for the first time. Also request that people not discuss others' experiences outside of the group. Facilitating trust and comfort is important for success.*
- *Explain that the group will be a combination of discussion and activities.*
- *Track attendance.*

Ask the participants to each introduce themselves, including what each hopes to get out of this class and write responses on the flip chart, while generating conversation.

Next ask how long if any participants have lived independently prior to now and follow up by asking how the prospect of living independently makes participants feel & why, recording answers on flip chart. After each answer, explore the whys if individuals have not explained their answers. Please be certain to include feelings that may be omitted, adding a personal experience when possible or relevant. While it's important to explore feelings regarding previous experiences, it's also important to keep the class on track. This curriculum has a definite beginning, middle and end and is intended to offer a concrete framework. It will be most useful if the participants can move through each subject area to completion.

For the purposes of this class, we will assume that most of you are currently living in adult homes where many concrete needs are taken care of. If there is a problem such as a lack of heat, or physical injury, there is staff on-site to respond and assist. If you are participating in this class, you are considering moving into supported housing, apartment treatment or another model of enhanced independent living. While this decision unquestionably creates much more responsibility, it also provides a greater sense of freedom and choice about where and how you live your life. Ask class participants about their current living arrangements; including their likes and dislikes. Explore why they are considering making a change and record relevant responses on the flip chart.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Session 2 – Introduction to independent living

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

U.S. Census data suggests that 32.7 million Americans live alone. That represents 28% of our population - so if this is now your choice, you are in great company. A lot goes into the decision to live independently, whether it's with a roommate/s or solo - or with the support of an off-site case manager – or none. You will also need to consider whether to live in an apartment, a house, or to rent a room in a dwelling, how to budget expenses, how to furnish and decorate, etc. This class does not aim to help you make any of these choices; it will focus on helping you prepare to take this step. This series of classes will help you prepare for the most common things that go wrong when we live independently. As the leader, if you can insert some of your own experiences here, please feel free to do so. Anyone who has lived independently can tell you that a key to success, happiness and reduced anxiety is BEING PREPARED.

The thought of living alone or with greater independence may be frightening at first. Like any new challenge, it takes time to adjust. Can you identify some of the things that worry you about as you approach taking this step? Generate discussion and take notes on the flip chart. Take time to explore what has gone wrong for folks when they have lived on their own and how they managed the situation. Also ask if there was a way that planning ahead could have been useful or even prevented the problem? Additionally explore if participants believe that greater independence is worth the added responsibility and effort. Make relevant notes on flip chart.

By the conclusion of this series of classes each one of you will ideally have a manual that contains all necessary emergency contact information. The creation of this manual and when to use it is the work that lies ahead of us. Please complete all the steps comprehensively whether you have a roommate/s or live alone.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders

Session 3 – Conduct a preliminary safety check when choosing a residence

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

When you start looking at potential apartments or houses, conduct a preliminary safety check and consider the results before making a final decision about moving in. Some of the deficiencies may be fixable, and others may not. Also, some deficiencies may be less important to you. It is however important to conduct it and then you can weigh and decide just how much of a deterrent the outcome might be.

1. Is the neighborhood safe? How isolated is the apartment or house? Is the immediate area well lit? Be sure to consider the path to transportation as well. Though the block itself may feel safe or well lit, what about the streets toward mass transportation, if you intend to use it?
2. Are entry doors solid and secure or can they be easily tampered with? Is the entryway well lit? Are locks secure? Is there a deadbolt? Is there a peephole or a way you can see someone who is at your door without opening it?
3. Are windows secure? Do they all have locks? If so, how secure are they? Are their sliding glass doors? Are they secure? How?
4. Are mailboxes secure?
5. In case of a fire or other emergency, is there a means of egress other than the front door? If not, can one be created?
6. Are appliances in working order? Are they safely installed?
7. Do plumbing and electricity appear to be working? Is water pressure adequate? Is there hot water? Do toilets flush?
8. Are there laundry facilities? If not, where is the closest Laundromat?
9. Be sure there is a super or managing agent or landlord who is responsible for repairs, problems and maintenance. What days and hours are they available? Can they be contacted after hours?

Consider which of the above can be fixed or adjusted if they require it. For instance, if there is not a peephole in the door or any visible way to see someone at the door, find out in advance if it is permissible to install a peephole. When reviewing each point, ask the class how a problem or deficiency can be remedied. Are there other thoughts about safety? List all ideas presented and discuss the importance of each.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Sessions 4 and 5 - Fire safety and security

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach*

Fire Safety

One of the most important tasks we should all prepare for in a home environment is the possibility of a fire. Especially if you have never had the experience of involvement with one, it is easy to become complacent and not take adequate. In fact, there are combination CO and fire detectors made in one unit now.

Developing a fire escape plan is an important exercise to do from the beginning. You should always look for more than one route for escape in case one exit is blocked by smoke or flames. If you do not have a fire escape, buy a rope ladder and store it near a window. Read the directions ahead and have a trial run. In case of a real fire there will obviously be no time for reading directions. Also be sure that windows can be easily opened.

Always call 911 to report a fire, but be sure to exit first. If you do have a fire and leave the building do not go back in for anything. Keeping doors closed helps to slow a fire down. If there are already smoke and flames, crawl on the floor beneath the smoke if necessary. It will help prevent smoke inhalation. Doors can be very hot- try to get a sense of whether they are touchable or not before touching. **Never** use elevators; always use stairs to exit. If you are stuck in your apartment or house, cover the vents and cracks around the doors to prevent smoke from getting in. If for some reason your clothing or any part of your body catches on fire, cover your face with your hands, drop to the floor, and roll all over. Using a blanket or towel can be helpful to extinguish fire. This technique is commonly known as STOP – DROP – ROLL.

Note these prevention measures:

- Never leave lighted candles unattended.
- Do not use your stove or oven to heat your apartment or house.
- Do not leave space heaters unattended and do not sleep with them turned on. Be cautious in selecting a space heater. Be sure to evaluate for safety.

- Have a residential style fire extinguisher on hand and know how to use it.

Security

- Be sure the hardware on your front door is not loose and in proper working order. If it is not repairable, purchase new hardware.
- Change locks on all doors to your apartment or house. Previous occupants may have retained their keys and could make their way in.
- If there is not a deadbolt on your door/s, buy and install them
- Inspect the windows for locks. If they do not lock, have locks installed and use them all the time. Windows should be locked whenever they are not open. Do not leave windows open or unlocked when you are not home. Depending on the floor number of your home and the accessibility, consider closing and locking windows when asleep. As a matter of comfort rather than safety, screens and storm windows are desirable to have.
- If your door does not have a peephole and you cannot view who is at your door through a window, install a peephole. Never open the door to someone you don't know or are not expecting.
- If possible have lights installed outside your apartment or house. Bright lights serve as a deterrent to potential intruders.
- It's a plus to have a landline as a back-up to cell phones.
- Retain a flashlight & transistor radio & batteries for both, a supply of bottled water, canned food and a can opener in case of a black out.
- Keep a small safe or locked box to store important documents an/or valuables.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Session 6 - Identify your human resources

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach*

Living independently affords a lot of freedom and choice, but it also carries with it responsibility. There are so many things that can go wrong, we want to continue troubleshooting so there are few surprises once you're on your own. One of the most important resources for trouble-shooting, often overlooked, is our human resources, or the people in our lives who can be or can become helpers. Let's spend some time reviewing who those people can be and record who to get in touch with them, so we're not scrambling around looking for a phone number when an emergency arises.

- First, do you have a case or care manager to rely on? If the answer is yes, be sure to record what days and times they are available and what the most effective way to contact them is. Be sure they have your full address and phone number recorded too. Find out and record the scope of their responsibilities ahead of time.
- Chances are there is a landlord, managing agent or super who is responsible for housing needs. Again, find out for each what their scope of work is, when they are available and how to contact them. Know their days and hours of availability. Having all this information can save you wasted time in an urgent situation.
- If none of these people live or work on-site it will be especially useful to get to know a neighbor or two.
- If you connect with an on-site super, remember that pay is not particularly high and tips and an end of year holiday gift is always appreciated.
- ****A very valuable activity to consider** is trying to become friendly with some neighbors. Some buildings, particularly smaller ones are more conducive to this. You can sort of size people up at the mailboxes, coming and going, in the laundry room or in the elevator. Smile and introduce yourself and if you feel comfortable, invite someone in for coffee and a chat.

- Losing your key can create a major challenge and this never seems to happen at a convenient time. If you work with a support person like a case manager or care manager, perhaps they routinely retain spare keys. In many buildings the super retains keys in a locked box for just such an event. This is also when and how a neighbor can be helpful. If there is a neighbor who you *absolutely* trust, it's always useful to give them a spare key to hold on to. DO NOT under any circumstances hide a key under your doormat or in a key-rock. This can make access super-easy for an intruder. If all else fails, perhaps a friend or family member who is relatively close can hold a key for you. Locksmiths can take a long time to respond and can be costly.
- Making friends with a neighbor can be helpful in many ways other than responding with a spare key. They can help with many problems AND it's always nice to have someone close by if you're lonely and simply want some good company. Of course *being* a friend can also be a rewarding and fun experience.

Invite an inspirational speaker to talk with the class about his or her first or current independent living situation. Select someone who had previously lived in a more restricted setting. Ask them to address some problems they encountered and how they managed them. Encourage questions and discussion.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Session 7 - First aid

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach*

First aid is the urgent or immediate attention you give or receive when someone is injured and/or ill, until you are able to get full medical care. Sometimes first aid is an adequate response to an injury, but it's important to get a professional medical opinion when in doubt. Consider inviting a nurse or other medical professional to talk about first aid to the class. The Red Cross or local hospitals are good free resources.

NEVER hesitate to call 911 if:

- Your injury is greater than a mild injury
- You smell something toxic
- You experience any severe pain
- You experience difficulty breathing
- You experience chest pain
- You experience shortness of breath (or have a fear of heart attack)
- You feel faint or begin losing consciousness, experience sudden numbness or slurred speech
- You experience any sudden mental changes or confusion
- You experience visual changes including partial or full blindness
- You experience bleeding that appears uncontrollable
- You suspect a broken bone
- You experience choking
- You have severe burn/s
- You feel like hurting yourself
- You are experiencing any suicidal thoughts

Additionally consider visiting an emergency room or urgent care facility.

It's important to always keep a record of your current medication/s including dosages with you at all times. When going to a medical appointment or in an emergency, professionals always want to know in order to avoid providing

treatment or medication that could interact badly with medication you are already taking.

It's also important to keep on hand a record of your doctors/s contact information including address. Add to this the name of at least two local hospitals and urgent care facilities with addresses and phone numbers. Identify one or two people (neighbors, family or friends) who you can count on in an emergency.

Create a first aid kit that includes the following supplies:

For minor cuts, burns or scrapes: hydrogen peroxide for cleaning. Neosporin, hydrocortisone or another type of antiseptic cream. Several sizes of band aids, 4 X 4 gauze pads, adhesive tape, latex gloves.

For eye irritations: eye wash & eye cup or eye drops

Thermometer

For fever reduction or minor aches/ pains: Aspirin, Alleve, Tylenol, Advil

Cold packs to reduce swelling

Tweezers

Hand sanitizer (Purell), antacids, cold & cough medicines, laxatives, anti-diarrhea medicine, sunscreen.

It's useful to take a first aid class and there are some good ones available online; check out www.redcross.org for example.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Sessions 8 and 9 – Troubleshooting issues with electricity, plumbing and unwanted pests

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach*

Electricity

One of the first pieces of information you will want to know when moving into a new residence is the location of circuit breaker box. Circuit breakers are customarily built into a metal box. In apartments they are often found in closets or basements. In house they are often in the garage, basement or even outdoors. As defined by Wikipedia, “a circuit breaker is an automatically operated electrical switch designed to protect an electrical circuit from damage caused by excess current from an overload or short circuit. Its basic function is to interrupt current flow after a fault is detected... a circuit breaker can be reset (either automatically or manually) to resume normal operation”. When you find your circuit breakers, be sure each switch is labeled so can effectively associate each switch with each electrical light, appliance or power source in your home. When conducting this part of the class, it can be very helpful to visit, examine and demonstrate how the circuit breakers operate in the building where the class is being offered. If this isn’t possible, a local trip to a location where you *can* demonstrate how circuit breakers work would be practical.

When there is any electrical problem that needs professional repair, report it to your landlord, super or managing agent. If for some reason you need to manage it on your own, be sure to use a licensed electrician.

It’s always useful to keep spare light bulbs and batteries on hand.

Plumbing

All kinds of plumbing problems can arise, many of which will need professional attention. Again, report the problems that you cannot repair on your own to your landlord, super or managing agent.

See if your building keeps a toilet plunger on hand and if it does, find out where it is stored. If there isn't one, you may want to purchase one and stash it back in the closet hoping to never use it. A clogged toilet needs immediate attention but is also very manageable with a good old-fashioned plunger. If you have never used one, try using it before you have a problem so you can get the hang of it. There are videos on YouTube that demonstrate use.

Another prevention measure that is easy to take is to purchase an inexpensive screen that fits over your shower/tub drain. This will act as a trap for hair and will help you avoid clogged shower/tub drains. It is also helpful to keep a liquid drainer cleaner on hand for slow or clogged drains in sinks or shower/tub.

There are other problems that you should definitely call your landlord, super or managing agent about such as leaky pipes and faucets. Additionally, if your toilet continues to run or will not flush, the tank may need a replacement part. Best to leave this to the professionals. Once again, if your landlord, super or managing agent advise you to call a plumber, be sure to hire one who is licensed.

Insect or rodent infestations

Fortunately or unfortunately we share our planet with other creatures. This doesn't mean you must be open to sharing your living space with them. There are a myriad of pests that you may be confronted with in your home and it's always helpful to know exactly what they are when trying to rid your home of them. Many residential settings have exterminators visit on a regular basis. Inquire about this when you move in and unless you have young children or pets, you may want to consider having an exterminator visit your unit at regular intervals. Educate yourself as to what the exterminator does, including the content and toxicity of any pesticides that are utilized. These are personal choices to be made but prevention is easier than intervention once the problem has started. Another method of prevention is to keep all edibles that do not need refrigeration stored in airtight containers. Even bags of chips should not simply be clipped shut. At the

very least, use zip lock or other closable storage bags. Containers are most effective. It's also important to do a good clean up after meals, snacking and food preparation, so there are no crumbs or spills to attract unwanted pests. Equally important is regular disposal of trash. Do not allow food to remain in your trash for long.

It is common to find ants in the spring. The very large ones are carpenter ants and may require examination by a professional exterminator. Termites also fit into this category. Their presence can signal a bigger structural problem, so definitely report them to your landlord, super or managing agent. Most buildings have a contract with an exterminating company. Often carpenter ants are munching on wood and this should be determined for the most effective management. Some buildings have roaches and/or water bugs.... good to report these too. Moths can be prevented by using moth repellent substances in the storage of your clothing....they have quite an appetite for sweaters and other woolens, so its worth the trouble to use mothballs, cedar blocks or another type of deterrent.

One of the more unpleasant and challenging pest problems to be faced with is mice or rats. There are many things that can be done to eliminate them but the critical first step is to determine their points of entry. Often it's around pipes under sinks, near windows, air conditioners, under cabinets. Generally building staff like supers or exterminators have experience with this and can easily plug these points with something like steel wool. After blocking their entry points, setting old-fashioned mousetraps will let you know if your efforts to eliminate them have been successful. There are also sonic repellents that plug into electrical outlets which emit a high frequency noise that is a deterrent. There are mixed reviews on their efficacy, but definitely worth a try. These are not to be used however if you have pets. Be sure they are approved for use around babies as well. Read all the material accompanying these devices before purchasing.

Another intruder that is a challenge to eliminate is bedbugs. Reports reflect that one out of five Americans have reported the presence of bedbugs at home. Most often they are identified because of human bedbug bites, which can be hard to distinguish from other bites. Often they itchy, in a line (think breakfast, lunch, dinner!) and located on face, neck, arms and hands and red, sometimes with a dark spot in the middle.

Bedbugs are small, reddish-brown insects that bite the exposed skin of sleeping humans and animals to feed on their blood.

“Bedbug infestations usually occur around or near where people sleep... They hide in the cracks and crevices of mattresses box springs, bed frame, headboards, objects or clutter near beds. They can also be found under peeling paint and loose wallpaper, under carpeting near baseboards In upholstered furniture seams, under light switch plates or electrical outlets” (www.MayoClinic.org)

Besides bites, other signs that you may have bedbugs include bloodstains on your bedcovers, dark spots which are the excrement also on sheets, blankets, etc, or a musty odor that bedbugs emit. If you find bedbugs, efforts to eliminate them should begin immediately. Wash all bedding, curtains, all clothing in the washing machine on the hottest setting. Dry them for at least a 30 minute cycle. Other items that cannot go in the washing machine, like shoes, should also be placed in the dryer for at least 30 minutes. If your mattress is infested, it's best to get rid of it and buy a new one. Mattresses are never good to buy used. It is most effective to have a reliable exterminator who has experience with bedbug elimination treat the affected areas for you. Landlords are required to pay for bedbug extermination in NYC AND are prohibited from renting apartments or units that have an infestation. Throughout New York State landlords are required to provide a bedbug history to potential renters. Some landlords in New York State will take responsibility for extermination. It's important to notify your landlord if you suspect you have an infestation.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Session 10 – Miscellaneous

- *Take attendance.*
- *Check in with participants to see if there were any questions or concerns that came up after the last class.*
- *Check in to confirm people are feeling comfortable with this approach.*

Preparation is the best prevention. Complete the templates within your Participant Guide to your best ability and keep it somewhere handy.

Here are some random suggestions that do not seem to neatly fit into any previous categories:

- Be mindful that break ins and robberies occur. Lighting in and outside of your home is a deterrent. If you go out at night or for a prolonged period of time, consider purchasing timers for your lamps so lights will automatically go on in your absence. Have your mail held at the post office when you are away. Likewise if you have newspapers delivered. A pile up of mail or papers announces that you are away and serves as an invitation to intruders. Lock up and hide valuables *all the time*, but especially if you are away. If you use FaceBook or other forms of social media, do not post pictures of vacations...this also serves to announce that your apartment or home is unprotected. You might consider purchasing insurance if you keep valuables at home. Insurance companies can give you phone estimates very quickly.
- In order to prevent falls, put a mat outside your front door and/or directly inside as well so people do not track water in your home. If your tub or shower does not already have skid prevention appliques, install nonslip strips or a tub mat. Bathroom mats outside the tub or shower are a source of falls, so consider using one only when getting out of the shower or bath.
- Find out who is responsible for snow and ice removal outside your apartment. If it is you, be sure to keep a shovel and some de-icing salt or material on hand and use it when necessary.
- There are considerable benefits to keeping your home neat and clean.
 1. Allergies and asthma reduction
 2. If you have fewer things lying around, you are less likely to fall and risk injury

3. Kitchens and bathrooms can harbor germs that cause sickness or disease. Handling raw meats, fish and chicken on countertops especially need sanitizing. Spills as well. Cleanliness and sanitary conditions at home will keep you healthier.
4. Believe it or not, many people report feeling less stressed when they live with a sense of order, tidiness and cleanliness.

Its good to remember that when you have any questions regarding independent living, there is a wealth of information at your fingertips online.

Ask the class if there are subjects that have not been covered yet and be sure to address open questions.

Supplies: Attendance sheet, flip chart, markers, pencils, tape, individual folders for each participant

Resources

www.cdc.gov

www.usfa.gov

www.bustle.com

www.rewire.org

Tips for Living Alone for the First Time by Allie Shaw

www.quora.com

www.nhcps.com

www.mayoclinic.org

www.emergencycareforyou.org

www.rd.com

www.healthenews.com

www.pestworld.org

www.webmd.com

www.redcross.org