

Case Study – Roommates Supporting Accountability

You want to support your roommate and friend in accountability, but you're not sure how.

You live in a shared house with 4 other roommates. You are all in your late 20s and early 30s. You all have different relationships with each other, but in general, everyone is friendly towards each other. You and your roommates Alice and John are home regularly, but your other two roommates, Lisa and Paul, are often gone from the house because of their jobs and relationships.

Over the last year, Paul has rarely been home, since he is often staying at his girlfriend, Tracy's house when he is not working. He seems to have other friends, but you're not sure how close they are to him. He attends the monthly house meetings, but other than that, you and the rest of the housemates rarely see him.

You, Alice and John are very close and often spend time together. You make dinner together most evenings, talking about your days and what's going on in your lives. Alice and John are partners in a long-term relationship and are constantly together. Alice, John and Lisa found the house together and interviewed many different roommates before finding you and Paul. The 5 of you have been living together for the last 3 years.

Because Lisa is often traveling, John and Alice have become the defacto people in charge. They are often the ones collecting the rent and reminding the other roommates about their chores, as well as handling the complicated relationship with the landlord. They are the ones who deliver the rent each month, and make any communications with the landlord about things that need to be fixed or taken care of around the house. They are often the ones, with you, who keep the house clean and make sure that basic necessities are taken care of such as grocery shopping, making sure there is toilet paper, cleaning supplies, taking out the trash and recycling, and dividing up and paying the bills each month. They have also been the ones to decorate the house and it often feels like it is "their house," even though it is shared by 5 people.

Before he began spending most of his time away from the house, Paul would be home, but because he struggles with depression, would often be in his room by himself. When he did hang out with the rest of the roommates, he would often drink until he passed out.

Over the last year, his girlfriend would be over sometimes and you and Alice have witnessed him treating his girlfriend disrespectfully. He would often snap at her (in person and on the phone), as well as generally ignore her when she was over at the house; and he often spoke over her in conversations. Most of the examples you have witnessed are small acts, which by themselves could be taken as nothing, but cumulatively have left you both feeling uneasy and concerned. You and Alice have talked about this together in depth, but neither of you know what to do about it.

Paul has had a tense relationship with John because they bumped heads about Paul not doing his chores because he would be passed out or hung over. Lisa and Paul don't really know each other because they are rarely ever at the house together. You and Alice have had better relationships with Paul than the rest of the housemates. They haven't been very close relationships, but they have not had any tension and often involve laughing. You think of each other as friends.

One of the last times Paul was home for an extended period of time, he got into a screaming fight with his girlfriend over the phone one night. You, Alice and John heard the fight through the entire house because Paul was yelling so loud. The three of you could not only hear Paul yelling, but also what seemed like the throwing of objects and hitting of walls behind his closed bedroom door. Paul was cursing and screaming at his girlfriend and the three of you were not sure what to do. After the call was over, Alice went and knocked on Paul's door to check on him, but he refused to talk. About 20 minutes later, Paul stormed out of the house without a word and drove away.

You, Alice and John were worried about him being behind the wheel when he was so mad. The three of you tried to call and text him, but he did not respond. A little later, Paul's girlfriend knocked on the door, saying that she had been calling Paul's phone, but he wasn't answering. She was very upset and worried about him. She talked and cried to the three of you for a couple of hours. She loves Paul very much and felt horrible and embarrassed for making him so mad. Eventually she went home and the three of you tried to contact Paul again, with no luck.

The next morning, Paul had still not come home and the three of you started to get very worried. John had to go to work and on his way to his car, found Paul, passed out in the passenger seat of his car parked in front of the house. Paul said he had no memory of getting home and seemed annoyed that everyone was so upset.

Since that last incident, you haven't seen Paul around much. Occasionally you and Alice get texts from his girlfriend when they have had a fight. You want to talk with him

about how he treats his girlfriend and about his drinking, but you don't know how to approach it. Alice and John want to talk with him too, but are not sure how, especially because they don't see him.