

# I LIVE LIKE THIS... *a grown-up flat-share*



With the soaring costs of renting, more and more people in their 40s and upwards are turning to sharing as a solution. Eva Orasch initially decided to share to reduce her outgoings but soon discovered more meaningful rewards

**Four years ago I made a significant change to my life** I'd been renting a one-bed flat in London for a few years but it was taking a big chunk out of my income – it's a real challenge renting on your own. And because at that time I wanted to reduce my hours to concentrate on getting a qualification in advertising and maybe set up my own business, I was very conscious of how much I was paying out each month.

**It started out as a joke** My friend Sarah was thinking about retraining as a personal coach and working from home, and we used to joke about sharing. I was 37 and Sarah 43, so it wasn't the usual time in life to consider living like that but, gradually, it began to make sense and we realised we could get a nicer, bigger place between us rather than tiny studio flats on our own.

**Sharing at your age?** Some people think the idea of living with other people when we're older is out of the question, because we're too set in our ways, would struggle to share a bathroom, would worry about the sharer not paying the bills on time... But I saw it differently. When you're older, you know what you want and what you don't want.


**Work out the hard bits before you move in** We were honest about what we wanted from the start. A bathroom each was a priority. We also

agreed to budget for a cleaner once a week too. When you're both working it reduces a lot of stress knowing the place will be clean. We set out who would pay which bills and when.

**Tasteful furniture** We both like how the flat is decorated but you have to compromise a little when you share a lounge and kitchen and not put too many of your cushions out or rearrange things without discussion! We checked with each other about furnishings in advance.

**I need my space!** By this point in our lives we were realistic about how much space we required. I'd advise anyone about to share to talk about the level of interaction you expect – you probably don't want to spend all your time together, but may enjoy sharing meals occasionally. We clarified that neither of us would be offended if the other decided to retire to the bedroom and not talk after a long day's work.

**Talk about bringing people back** I met my partner a couple of months before we moved in and spent a lot of weekends with him. But I did ask Sarah if it would be alright if he came back just occasionally, because I wouldn't want someone else being there too much either.

**At first it was just about saving money** For both of us the arrangement made good financial sense, but as we lived together, we began to see the benefits of companionship. Sarah had started working from home when we moved in and liked having somebody to chat with in the evenings. And because I'm interested in setting goals and moving on in my career, it was great for me to have a personal coach for free! Plus we'd watch box sets together with a glass of wine every now and again, and that's really nice and bonding. Having another person around brings new perspectives. It's definitely made life richer for both of us. 

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