

Living in Community

Diamond Green, 2016-17 NBA XPLOR Resident in Hiram-Mantua, OH



In NBA XPLOR there are four pillars: hands-on service/justice work, simple living in community, spiritual discernment on vocation, and Disciples leadership development. I noticed that all these have the common goal of being part of or helping the community. Well, now it is obvious what this blog is going to be about, right?

Living in community comes naturally to me. Back home in Chicago, I live with my mom and two sisters. But wait, there's more: my aunt and my grandmother live in an apartment building three blocks away. My aunt lives in the downstairs apartment with her five kids, and my grandparents live in the apartment above them. We might not live in the same space, but we spend so much time together that it's just the same. Living with all these people makes me well equipped to live in community with four people that I just met, right? Well, I thought it did, and I was wrong.

What's the most important thing that a community needs to exist? From what I have learned here in the Hiram-Mantua house, communication is a very important aspect of living in a community. Communication! What? Mind blowing, right; who knew? I was never introduced to this complex, but very simple, concept until I joined NBA XPLOR.

If you don't communicate with the people who live in your community, it can essentially ruin connections that you have established within your living community. Also, it will ruin the individual connections you have created with each of those individuals.

Communication was a non-existent thing in my former community living situation. I know most people say that living in a community with your family is a different dynamic but, in my opinion, it's not, because four strangers can become just as close as family, if not closer. Someone once told me, "friends are the family you choose." In my assigned family, we all are taught to survive independently, never needing help from another person; doing things by yourself is non-negotiable. I was scared to communicate because I knew I would be judged harshly by those in my family.

Coming into NBA XPLOR was pretty rough because the first thing required of us is communication. When I got here to Hiram, I did not expect anything less than what I was used to. Being one hundred percent wrong, I was thrown into a world of confusion.

Everybody wants to hug, or ask how you were, and somebody is always offering a helping hand. It was just really scary. It was also very irritating because, in my head, I thought when someone offers to help you, it meant that you are weak and unintelligent... If you're wondering why I stopped on a "...", it's because I'm still there. I'm still in a toxic, non-communal mindset, so my conclusion will not be "now I know the importance of living in community."

Don't get me wrong; I love my XPLOR family. But I wasn't ready to give up the way I *wasn't* living in community for the way I was *supposed* to be living in community.

I can say that now I am open to the idea of living in unison with a community of people, but I'm not quite there yet. But hey, that's why I'm doing another year of NBA XPLOR! It's going to be hard going through the process again, but if it's what I have to do to get me to that "now I know the importance of living in community" line, then I will do it. Hopefully, at that moment, I can write a more helpful conclusion on living in community.

*NBA XPLOR is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. **Learn more and apply at nbacares.org/xplor.***