

# 10 Things to Do in Your Neighborhood to Be Engaged, Aware, and Supportive

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- 1 Take the first step.** Get to know the families around you; be bold and introduce yourself, especially to newcomers who move into the neighborhood.
- 2 Find meaningful connections with families.** Get to know something about their family, their interests, and their pets. You'll likely discover shared interests that could be the foundation for a meaningful relationship. Once you discover these, it will be easier to become friends and support each other.
- 3 Plan neighborhood celebrations and get-togethers.** Give people time to get to know each other informally. Be sure to offer name tags to help everyone learn or remember names.
- 4 Keep an eye out for neighborhood children.** Let parents know when their kids do something positive or fun, for instance: "I heard your son/daughter playing drums yesterday. They're getting really good." If you have concerns or questions raise them with care, not in an accusatory way, but as a supporter.



**5 Ask for help sometimes.** Everyone needs a hand from time to time, be it with a home renovation project, seasonal gardening, or even just keeping an eye on the house while you're out of town. Having a helping hand is always nice, so be sure to ask your neighbors when these situations arise. It reminds them that they are in important part of the neighborhood. It also increases the chances of them asking you for help when they need it. This practice can go a long way toward creating a supportive, inclusive neighborhood culture.

**6 Invite families to participate with you.** Don't be afraid to invite your neighbors—without badgering them—to visit places that are important to you such as your favorite coffee shop or workout class. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to go into a new place where you don't know anyone; your invitation could make it easier.

**7 Get to know with whom your child spends time.** If your child spends time with a neighbor and their children at their house, thank them for being so hospitable. You may have fun with a group barbecue or taking walks together. These are all ways of cementing positive, mutual relationships.

**8 Offer support when appropriate.** If you find out that a family is struggling or dealing with difficult challenges, find thoughtful ways to offer support and care. This can be anything from bringing them a casserole meal to helping them with yardwork. These kinds of expressions of care during tough times are remembered and valued.

**9 If you are worried about a family you know:**

- Think of a reason to stop by their house and start a conversation.
- Call and let them know you are concerned and suggest that you go out for coffee or inviting them over to talk. Offer whatever means of help you feel comfortable in giving.
- Talk to a mutual friend and find out if they'd be willing to go out with the family as a group to offer support.
- Interact socially, not just around the problem.
- Empathize with the parents by offering suggestions based on your own experience.
- Call professionals in when necessary. If you suspect abuse, call Childline (800-932-0313).

**10 If you see a cause for concern in public:**

- Use empathy and tell the caregiver the same thing happened to you and offer suggestions if you can.
- Divert the caregiver or child's attention so things can calm down.
- Find a person in authority, like a store manager, to intervene.
- If it seems necessary, get their license number and call the police.